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The American Legion

For God and Country

Vol. 149, No. 1

The Magazine for a Strong America

JULY 2000

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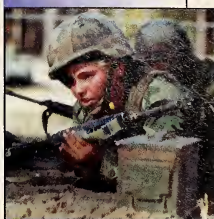
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THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.6 million readers. These wartime veterans, working through nearly 15,000 community-level Posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youths.

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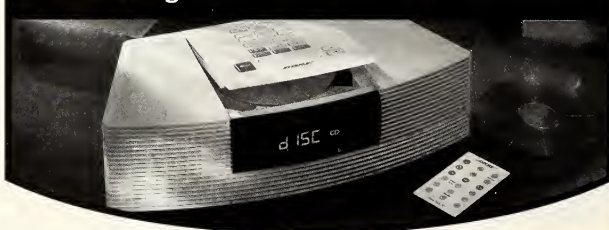
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Anti-Religion Extremism

Things have gotten out of hand concerning the school prayer issue ("The Expulsion of God," May). The premise is based on the separation of church and state as interpreted by the Supreme Court. It's a farce to ban prayer in school or to ban the display of the Ten Commandments in courtrooms.

How soon can we expect the Supreme Court to decide that laws against murder and thievery are unconstitutional? Both are proscribed in the Ten Commandments and thus the laws violate the separation of church and state. Also, since marriage is advocated in the scriptures, we can expect to get rid of marriage. Shall I go on?

— Dick Ripperre, Acton, Mass.

Atheism Begets Ignorance

Robert Novak's points are well taken ("The Expulsion of God," May). Madalyn Murray O'Hare's atheism took prayer out of the schools. Taking religion out of the schools has produced a state religion: Ignorance.

I teach literature. My students are quick to tell me that references to God, Jesus, any Christian denomination or practice is against the law. If that's the case, teaching the works of John Milton, the Arthurian cycle and Shakespeare becomes impossible. My students are so busy policing that "myth of separation" which could infect them, seduce them or civilize them that they have no time, attention or memory for any learning.

— Patricia M. Williams, Canadensis, Pa.

Kids Need Supervision

I am not opposed to school prayer ("The Expulsion of God," May). We had school prayer when I was a child. It never hurt anyone that I know of and probably did some good to others.

However, the problem in the schools today isn't the lack of prayer, it is a lack of discipline due to so many children being latchkey kids. While they are home unsupervised by adults, they are exposed to more and more negative influences. There is such a lack of respect by the younger people that it is appalling to see some of their behavior these days.

— Bruce Harpster, Rehoboth Beach, Del.

Tauscher is Off-Track

I wish Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., had been in Russia with my wife and me (Big Issues, "Should the United States Continue to Aid Russia?" May). One of our sons has a missionary service in Moscow. The people there are poor. All federal aid goes to the government and the people never see a penny.

Armed guards are everywhere with machine guns. There are no smiles on the people's faces. Yes, Russia needs aid, but for the people, not the government. If Rep. Tauscher wants to see the real Russia, I'd be happy to show it to her and prove her statements wrong.

— Al Hoffmeyer, Cedar Ridge, Calif.

Back to the Civil War

I liked the article in the May issue about Civil War re-enactments ("Revisiting the Blue and the Gray").

WE WANT YOUR OPINIONS

The American Legion Magazine welcomes letters concerning articles that appear in the publication. Letter writers are also encouraged to submit photographs of themselves for possible publication with their letters. Be sure to include your hometown and a daytime phone number for verification. All letters are subject to editing. Send your opinions to:

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The Cedar Creek event is held every fall at Middletown, Va., on a portion of the original battlefield.

There were other Legionnaires on the field. I am a member of New Hampshire Post 23 and participate in the re-enactment as a member of the 28th Mass.

Vol. Inf. (Irish Brigade). It is a great hobby and allows for some of the camaraderie we experienced in the modern armed forces.

— Carl F. Parker, Milford, N.H.



Silent Service Centennial

This year, the U.S. Navy submarine force is celebrating its 100th anniversary of service. Since 1900, our submarines have evolved from small submarines to today's nuclear-powered warships.

The U.S. Postal Service issued a series of five postage stamps to commemorate the occasion. The U.S. submarine force has lost a total of 52 submarines and more than 3,500 officers and men. These men remain on eternal patrol serving their supreme commander. They gave the ultimate sacrifice in this country's service so that we may enjoy the freedoms we have today.

— Francis J. Rabaey, Taunton, Minn.

WWII Diploma Drive

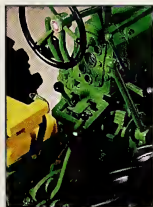
Your article, "WWII Heroes Finally Receive High School Diplomas," (April) mentioned that several states were following the lead of Massachusetts and Nebraska in issuing diplomas to WWII vets who did not finish high school.

Unfortunately, the article did not mention Iowa. As a sponsor of the legislation, I am pleased to report that Iowa recently joined the growing list of states participating in Operation Recognition.

— Rep. Steve Warnstadt, Sioux City, Iowa



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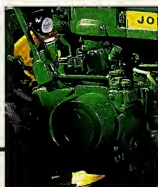


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Taxes are Anti-American

My compliments on the article "The Greedy Hand" (April). This subject is long overdue for discussion, and *The American Legion Magazine* is probably one of the first major publications to acknowledge this serious anti-American socialist issue.

I hope the article sparks other Americans into remembering what freedom really means – limited government.

— Bob Vandevender, Plainfield, Ill.

Shlaes Displayed Courage

Amity Shlaes ("The Greedy Hand," April) had the courage to tell the story of how our government has taken extra liberties with the income tax.

I know we should pay some tax for our government to operate, but the income tax today is abusive: The death tax is abusive. The marriage tax is abusive. Taxing the elderly is abusive. Taking one's home to pay tax is abusive. Taxing us to the point that we cannot pay our children's college tuition is abusive.

I hope to see additional articles that bring to light abuses of our overstepping government. It is good for America, and it is patriotic.

— Robert Hill, Wallis, Texas

Sad Side of the Military

Editor's Note: The following essay, written by Ian Daniel Foley, grandson of Past National Commander Daniel F. Foley, won first prize in a contest sponsored by the Sertoma Club. Ian is a 6th-grader at the Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis.

The government of the United States should pay decent, livable salaries to military personnel in order to attract brighter and more dedicated recruits. In the current competitive job market we have, the poor salaries of

the military cannot compete with pay in non-military jobs. Right now, many military personnel who have families must rely on food stamps and second or third jobs in order to make ends meet.

Since 1982, federal figures show that military salaries have fallen 14 percent compared to civilian jobs. For instance, a starting teacher might get paid \$25,000 a year. A starting enlisted officer makes around \$15,000 a year plus some minor benefits for housing and food. This is a disgrace. How can we attract great people into the military when they cannot even support a family of three on their regular salary?

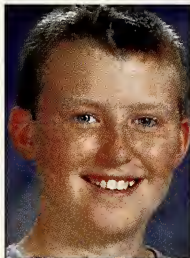
Many younger and low-ranking personnel have second or third jobs. Sometimes these jobs are part-time and sometimes they are full-time. These jobs tend to be manual labor, security or fast-food jobs. These second jobs tend to be night jobs. But if a soldier who works these second jobs is transferred overseas (like to Kosovo) then they have to give up the second job. So these soldiers go to foreign countries, where they are defending our country, putting their lives at risk and in the back of their mind, they know their family is living on the edge of poverty.

Even though the United States is a powerful country, we have many enemies. We must have strong armed services to protect the people of our country. How can we expect to have a strong military if potential recruits can go to non-military jobs such as teaching, computer jobs or secretarial jobs and make more than they can in the military?

When a person goes into the military, they are accepting the responsibility of protecting our country and knowing that at any time they can be called into active military duty. One of the biggest points of pride for our country is wearing a military uni-

form. But no matter how much pride you have wearing the uniform, it all crashes down when you have to apply for food stamps. The people who are willing to put their lives on the line should be well compensated by the people who rely on them. Even if we have to raise taxes, we should still do it to raise the pride of our military and let them know how much we care.

— Ian Daniel Foley, Minneapolis.



Ian Daniel Foley

Photo: Ian Daniel Foley

Putting Veterans to Work

The article "Putting Vets on a 'Hire' Plane" (May) outlined the excellent work The American Legion is doing to help separating service members make a smooth transition to civilian employment.

I should point out two minor items. The article states that The American Legion cooperated with VA on a study of licensing and certification. In fact, the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), which was mentioned in reference to that study, is an agency of the Department of Labor.

We have also changed the name of the licensing and certification Web site to UMET (Using your Military Experience and Training). The Web site can be found in the VETS section of the Department of Labor's Web site, as the article correctly noted.

The work VETS has done in licensing and certification will prove helpful to transitioning service men and women as well as veterans. VETS is committed to providing credentials and constantly improving its Web site. We are grateful for the strong support of VETS' work in this area by The American Legion, especially that of James P. Hubbard.

— Espiridon (Al) Borrego, assistant secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, U.S. Department of Labor
Washington

Correction

Editor's Note: In the May issue, the article "America Remembers Allied Invasion" incorrectly identified Andrew J. Higgins, the designer of the Higgins boat, as Tom Higgins. We apologize for the error.

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SOMETHING IS AWRY when veterans lose faith in the government they once served. Something repugnant beyond description occurs when the government fails to appreciate veterans for who they really are – American heroes who deserve better treatment than current Department of Veterans Affairs policy offers.

The VA extracted its credo from a speech delivered by President Abraham Lincoln, who said: "... to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan." The VA thought so much of the phrase that it is carved into the facade of its Washington, D.C.,

Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled last summer that VA could not assist veterans in establishing a "well-grounded" claim. The VA then issued the fast letter, which, in effect, applied the ruling to all veterans.

Not only was the rule change issued without the public notice and comment required by law, but also the letter undermined the non-adversarial relationship between VA and the veterans it was founded to serve. Unchallenged, this ruling would have contradicted federal law, judicial precedent and long-standing VA policy protecting the right of veterans to a fair and impartial adjudication of their claims.

Pitting veterans against the Department of Veterans Affairs is unacceptable!

This is why we need to stand behind legislation proposed by Rep. Lane Evans, D-Ill., the Duty to Assist Veterans Act of 1999. The bill (HR 3193) would require VA to assist veterans filing claims for benefits. It requires VA to inform claimants of any medical evidence needed to make their cases; it also requires VA to provide medical examinations to determine veterans' current disabilities.

VA's duty to assist veterans seeking benefits has been, and must remain, an integral part of its mission as an advocate for veterans' rights. Many observers, though, argue the agency has become more of an obstructionist than an advocate. As a result, there are high numbers of cases being dismissed as "not well-grounded" because veterans are not receiving the assistance they once did. With the added burden and costs to the veterans, many benefits to which they are entitled are going unclaimed.

Where does that leave homeless veterans? The disabled? The mentally impaired? Imagine how they feel now that their claims for benefits are labeled "ungrounded," as they receive the cold shoulder from VA.



National Commander Al Lance

Chris Shields

"We will not allow VA to become a disinterested bureaucratic bystander. It is immoral to make the claims process more difficult."

headquarters. That promise rings empty, however, if a veteran seeking compensation for a service-connected disability is turned away without basic assistance.

Exalting principle over technicality, The American Legion believes VA Secretary Togo West erred when he approved Fast Letter 99-89 in August. The letter ordered all regional VA offices to stop helping veterans develop their disability claims prior to a determination that they are "well-grounded."

The VA did not deviate from its own regulations independently. The

We will not allow VA to become a disinterested bureaucratic bystander. It is immoral to make the claims process more difficult. It is unconscionable to do it by deceitfully circumventing existing law.

On Oct. 12, lawyers representing The American Legion petitioned the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit to invalidate Secretary West's order. The court's Dec. 21 decision to deny our request to immediately rescind the fast letter is

a temporary setback. The court will decide this important issue – whether VA has a legal duty to assist claimants at the onset of the filing process – after the case is fully briefed, probably in late summer.

The American Legion will not stand by and allow this disservice to continue. We will continue to seek every avenue of redress. We do this because we believe those who have borne the battle are worth fighting for.

Isn't that what the VA was supposed to do as well?



For more on this and other VA issues, see "Playing the VA Game" on page 26 and "Focus on VA" on page 34.

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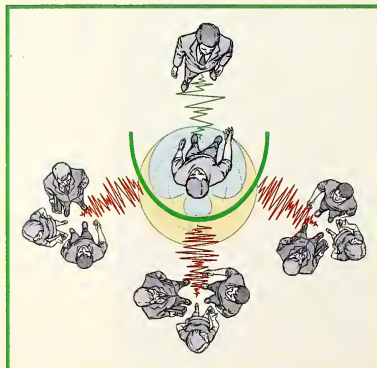
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Our new line of hearing aids—Claro—offers an even greater level of hearing performance. They combine three new digital technologies to help you understand speech even better in noisy situations.

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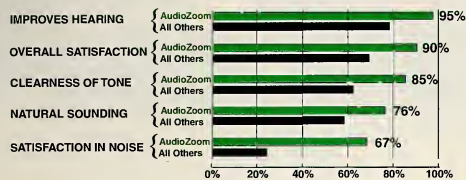


all directions around you, pinpointing unwanted noise and reducing it. It's like radar, but so fast it makes 30 complete scans every second! That means unwanted noise is located and reduced regardless of where it comes from.

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MarkeTrak Customer Satisfaction Survey



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1. Studies at Mayo Clinic and Washington University School of Medicine. Complete clinical test results available on request. Individual results may vary.

2. MarkeTrak Independent Customer Survey sampled 5,000 hearing-aid users throughout the United States. AudioZoom scored significantly higher in 28 of 34 categories including overall satisfaction and performance in background noise. Complete results available on request.

Note: Hearing aids are Class 1 medical devices and must be fitted by a licensed practitioner.



WOMEN IN COMBAT — TIME FOR A REVIEW

Social engineering can't trump the basic truths of human nature and necessities of realistic national defense.

Female Marines train for combat at Camp Lejeune in 1999 under simulated machine-gun fire.

By Elaine Donnelly

IN 1991, TWO EVENTS involving women in uniform changed the armed forces forever. One was Desert Storm, which deployed unprecedented numbers of women to the Persian Gulf under the watchful cameras of CNN. The other was the Tailhook scandal, involving besotted male aviators who allegedly abused female officers in a Las Vegas hotel corridor.

Female officers also engaged in "conduct unbecoming," but only the men were punished. Scores of careers were ruined, but critics demanded more. High-ranking admirals felt obligated to yield on matters of policy.

Schroeder's Harassment Cure. One of the most vocal feminists in Congress,

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., took advantage of Tailhook to push a paradoxical idea. Sexual harassment was a problem, she said, and putting women in combat was the solution.

Like most feminist theories, it made no sense. It suggested that abuse of women in a hotel corridor was wrong, but abuse of women at the hands of the enemy would be acceptable.

Many in Congress were reluctant to vote for a repeal of women's combat exemptions. So they voted to repeal the law exempting women from combat aviation and established a presidential commission to

find out what that would mean.

Following months of hearings, base visits and consultation with combat veterans and civilian experts, they recommended that women should continue to be exempt from most combat assignments. The commission based its decision on physical differences, but also expressed concern for American cultural values. Putting women in combat would signal acceptance, and even encouragement, of deliberate violence against women.

The commission adopted its recommendations the same day



Former prisoner of war Maj. Rhonda Lee Cornum after her release by the Iraqi government during Operation Desert Storm in 1991.



deployments on most combat ships.

Military Panders to Radical Feminists.

At that point, all lights were green for Pentagon feminists to impose their will on the military, even though their views had little in common with the majority of women serving. None of that mattered to Pentagon feminists, who promoted an even more far-reaching goal: changing the culture of the male-dominated military. One of the most prominent advocates of this idea was Duke

Law Professor Madeleine Morris, who became a paid advisor to then-Secretary of the Army Togo D. West Jr.

Dr. Morris advocated treating male and female soldiers as wholly interchangeable beings. She called for the eradication of "masculinist" influences she considered conducive to rape and came up with a novel idea to reduce sexual tensions.

Morris suggested that sensitivity trainers could instill an "incest taboo," so that men and women would "bond" as brothers and sisters rather than sexual partners. The Pentagon's Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, or DACOWITS, a mostly civilian

feminist advocacy group, continues to push for the same goals and more.

Assistant Army Secretary Sara Lister, who was later forced to resign because she called the Marines "extremists," did get the Army to take significant incremental steps in the wrong direction.

The current assignment of women to air cavalry helicopters, which routinely deploy with artillery and armored units, virtually guarantees that women will be shot down, killed or captured as prisoners of war. The policy was promoted as an equal rights triumph even though female casualties and prisoners would not have an equal opportunity to survive.

Coed Training II. West and Lister also reinstated co-ed basic training, which had been tried during the Carter administration. It failed because women suffered excessive injuries and men were not being challenged enough. Many tests have shown that even with extensive physical conditioning, women are 50-percent to 60-percent less strong and have about 25-percent to 30-percent less aerobic capacity for endurance than men.

To avoid another failure for co-ed basic training, civilian Army officials changed the regimen and redefined "success" in terms of women's morale. Early focus groups found that women's self-esteem improved by 14 points, while the men's morale sank by 17.

Co-ed basic training incorporated gender-normed tests, adjusted for physical differences and less-demanding requirements, such as map reading or first aid, and were assigned greater importance. Focus groups evaluated "cohesion," but only in terms of feelings and emotion, not combat readiness.

Gender-adjusted scores are considered more "fair" because they measure "equal effort," not results. There is no gender-norming on the battlefield. No one would consider adopting the concept in nonlethal combat, such as the Army-Navy football game.

A recent study on the culture of the military done by the Center for Strategic and International Studies found that only one-third of junior enlisted men believed women would pull their load in combat and 44 percent of junior enlisted women agreed. This is not a reflection of sexism, but honest concern about mission accomplishment and survival.

The 1990s version of gender-mixed training also introduced co-ed barracks,

President Bush lost the election to Bill Clinton. The new administration ignored the recommendations and quickly began overturning established policy. Then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin

"There is no gender-norming on the battlefield. No one would consider adopting the concept in nonlethal combat, such as the Army-Navy football game."

Follow-up directives soon authorized the placement of women in hundreds of occupations in or near previously closed combat units. In the same year, with the encouragement of Tailhook-chastened admirals, Congress voted to repeal the law exempting women from long-term



Instructor PH1 Phil Goodrich stands by as Yeoman 3rd Class Aida Cabrera prepares to fire an M-14 rifle during a practice session aboard a U.S. Navy ship. The vessel is en route to the Middle East during Operation Desert Shield in 1991.



While the Navy has had female pilots since 1974, they have been assigned combat roles only since the repeal of the Combat Exclusion

law in 1993. Today there are 246 female pilots in the Navy, 14 of whom fly FA-18 fighters like the pilots shown here.

but sexual tension undermined discipline. Instructors-turned-chaperones found it more difficult to instill skills and values necessary to prepare recruits for advanced training and adaptation to the military lifestyle.

In 1996, sex scandals involving drill sergeants and female trainees surfaced at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. Lurid reports emerged from all the services, except the Marine Corps, which continued to train genders separately. In many cases the sexual misconduct was consensual but exploitative, and always corrosive to good order and discipline.

Congress considered repealing co-ed basic training, but service chiefs already committed to the program testified that they did not want to reverse it. Official claims of "success," however, were contradicted by evidence of continuing misconduct and personnel loss.

Attrition Rates. According to a General Accounting Office report, 1998 rates for first-term (four-year) attrition escalated to 36 percent, with the Army's attrition rate highest at 39 percent. Losses among women averaged 45 percent, including 26 percent who separated due to pregnancy. By contrast, attrition in the Ma-

rine Corps continued a downward trend.

These problems have occurred not because of women, but because of Pentagon social engineers who ignore the power of sexuality. Collateral policies, such as rules to accommodate pregnant sailors on combatant ships, make military life more difficult or dangerous for everyone.

Women make good sailors, but the

"No one should have to die in pursuit of feminist fantasies."

evacuation rate for women serving on ships is about two-and-half times that of men — most often due to medical problems including pregnancy. During a recent deployment of the carrier Theodore Roosevelt, 45 of 300 women did not deploy or complete the cruise due to impending childbirth. Eleven of the 45 were flown off the ship while underway.

The unplanned loss of any sailor from a combat ship imposes considerable strain on crewmembers, especially in technical areas. Properly trained re-

placements are usually not available.

The imposition of similar problems on submarines would be far worse.

Nevertheless, in a 1999 speech, Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig called the submarine force a "white, male bastion," and suggested that the silent service should plan for the assignment of women to submarines. The tax-funded DACOWITS, which disregards the views of civilian and military women who do not support the feminist agenda, endorsed the idea with a unanimous vote.

DACOWITS members showed little interest in a definitive report, kept under wraps since 1995, which should have torpedoed the idea for good. The report, issued by the Science Applications International Corporation, described the reality of life inside the cramped quarters of submarines.

On an attack submarine, it is standard operating procedure to "hot bunk" 40 percent of the crew. That means that three men must share two bunks in rotating 6-hour shifts. Desirable bunks (away from passageways) are strictly assigned by rank and/or seniority. Setting aside preferred accommodations for the exclusive use of women would be a serious blow to morale.

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A drawing displayed in the SAIC report superimposed the living spaces of an attack sub on an area slightly wider but much shorter than the cabin of a civilian 747 aircraft. The report explained that the living area for more than 130 people is equivalent to a medium-size house, and human living space is about one-half to one-third of that available on a small surface ship. Piping and electrical modifications for gender-mixed crews may not be possible without lengthening the ship or removing combat equipment.

The SAIC report also raised serious concerns about the toxic effects of carbon monoxide and other atmospheric elements on a developing fetus. These elements, which are not harmful to adult sailors, cannot be eliminated from the closed environment of a submarine. Mandatory predeployment pregnancy tests would make sense, but feminists reject them as an infringement on women's rights.

Unplanned surfacings and hazardous helicopter evacuations, made necessary by more frequent medical and disciplinary problems, would endanger crewmembers and compromise the stealth mission of the submarine. If confronted by a pregnant submariner who is worried about birth defects in the middle of a 75-day deployment, what is a captain to do?

In the gender-integrated military, scenarios such as this are far more complicated than questions about what it would take to win the Cold War. Field commanders must deal with such issues every day, even as they struggle to accomplish missions that have increased 300 percent, with forces reduced by one-third to one-half.

Placating DACOWITS Will Cost Lives. The DACOWITS agenda is not to strengthen national defense, or even to protect the interests of the majority of military women who deserve the nation's support. The underlying goal is to satisfy feminist critics, put their theories to the ultimate test and try to elevate a few women to four-star rank, eligible to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Never mind that lives might be needlessly lost and national security compromised in pursuit of careerist goals.

Denmark, Canada and the Netherlands have consciously chosen to advance careers at the expense of combat readiness, but these are not world



Marine Pvt. Claudia Schmitt enjoys a brief moment of relaxation during combat training at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

powers. They depend on the United States for military defense in a still-dangerous world.

Some Pentagon leaders have tried to stifle comments about what is going on. The Navy's policy on pregnancy forbids negative comments about unplanned losses, even if female crewmembers become nondeployable for months at a time. The policy offers medical, housing and educational benefits, regardless of marital status or number of pregnancies. As in the civilian world, if you accommodate and subsidize single parenthood, you get more of it.

Truth, it seems, is the first casualty of social engineering. Dissembling is demoralizing because it erodes the confidence service members must have in their leaders.

The February 2000 CSIS study found that only 35 percent of service men surveyed agreed with the statement: "When my service's senior leaders say something, you can believe it's true." Only 44 percent of junior officers expressed confidence that their superiors "have the will to make the tough, sometimes unpopular decisions that are in the best long-term interest of the service."

Congress must give permission to military leaders to make tough, some-

times controversial decisions. The next commander in chief must demand complete candor about what has happened in recent years and take immediate steps to end ill-advised social engineering.

In her new book "The Kinder, Gentler Military," Stephanie Gutmann sheds light on the consequences of "ungendered visions" in actual practice. The book describes scenes of women struggling to compete in a world of false equality. No one should have to die in pursuit of feminist fantasies.

The volunteer force is losing experienced people and recruiters are hard-pressed to meet their goals. This is the only military we have, and our national security depends on it. Some other institution can deal with gender wars, but the military must be prepared for real war. □



Elaine Donnelly is president of the Center for Military Readiness and a former member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services.

Article design: Doug Rollison

The greatest fighter plane of World War II... THE VOUGHT F4U CORSAIR



Shown smaller than
actual size (Scale 1:32)
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A stunning replica of "Pappy" Boyington's legendary Corsair.

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STANDING WATCH

When the sea is at its worst, the Coast Guard at Yaquina Bay, Ore., is at its best.

The sun sets while the Coast Guard practices rescues off the coast of Oregon.



Surfman Kirk McKay and Machinery Technician Jo Boule discuss their roles in an upcoming training exercise.

By Layne Cameron
Associate Editor
Photos by Tom Strattman

men off of sinking vessels.

Search and Rescue. On Dec. 15, the Yaquina station sounded a bell-ringer – a search and rescue alarm with a high probability of someone dying. The on-duty crew donned dry suits, helmets, pyro vests and heavy-weather belts (that secure them to their boats) and throttled their boats from their barnacle- and starfish-speckled slip to the scene.

At 9:20 p.m., Watson, a member of Newport's Legion Post 116, was relaxing on his couch at home on standby when he was hailed by phone. Before he answered, his roommate quipped that this was the big one. As it turned out, his prognostication was right.

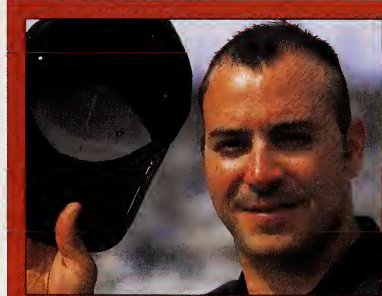
A home port fishing vessel, *Blue Heather*, was having trouble and radioed for assistance. Coast Guard boats idled up to the Bar, standing by. The ship made it to the mouth of the channel only to lose power and begin sliding toward the north jetty.

Blue Heather slammed into the rocks, was pummeled by breakers and sank in 11 minutes. "It seemed like organized chaos when I got there," remembered Watson. "The whole bay smelled of diesel fuel, pieces of the boat were everywhere, helicopters were flying overhead and the sky was lit up with illumination flares." A deflated life raft and two unused survival suits resting on the rocks added to Watson's foreboding.

FOR THE commercial fishing fleet based in Yaquina Bay, Ore., winter is the rainmaker – and not in terms of the soggy weather. It's crab season, and consistent brimming crab pots (traps) translate to a prosperous year. On the fishermen's commutes, however, a formidable obstacle stands between the placid bay and the Pacific.

Locals simply call it "The Bar." And it should not be confused for a friendly tavern by any means. The Bar is a widow-maker of a water hazard where the ocean slams into the outgoing Yaquina River like a freight train colliding with a school bus. "We spend a lot of time sitting at the Bar," said Boatswain Eric Watson from the helm of a 44-foot motor lifeboat. "A shallow, breaking bar is far more dangerous than a stormy, deep sea. The breakers can erase cabins off the deck, along with people and equipment."

Not surprisingly, the majority of the Yaquina Bay Coast Guard Station's calls happen on or near the Bar. The station averages nearly 600 distress calls annually, which range from surfers needing help to rescuing fisher-



Boatswain Eric Watson shows off the traditional sailing needle in his cap. In a bygone era, boatswains were once tasked with repairing their own sails. The sails are gone, but the needle remains.

"A shallow, breaking bar is far more dangerous than a stormy, deep sea. The breakers can erase cabins off the deck, along with people and equipment."

– Boatswain Eric Watson



One of Yaquina Bay's two 44-footers returns to its homeport. The two boats bear the brunt of the station's calls, earning them the nickname "the workhorses of the Coast Guard."

One fisherman was plucked off the rocks by helicopters, two were pulled from the water (one of whom died later). The one that gnaws at Watson, though, was the fisherman who was

never recovered. "We searched all night and the next day to find him, but we never did," he says.

The recollection comes some six months later on a sun-drenched day that

finds the Bar deceptively serene. As Watson navigates over the quiet Bar, he points to the telltale remnants of *Blue Heather* littering the rocks.

Sunny Skies, Flat Seas. The Pacific on this day is dead calm. Periods of flat seas and fair winds do set in on occasion. "It looks like our summer came on a Tuesday this year," joked Machinery Technician George Perez. During these down times, the crews' schedules are filled with seemingly never-ending maintenance. The station's fleet of the *Victory* (a 52-foot motor lifeboat), two 44s, a 30-foot surfboat and a 21-foot safeboat stand as shining symbols of Coasties' dutiful maintenance.

Nestled below the deck of a 44 (better known as the workhorse of the Coast Guard), for example, purr two mint Detroit Diesel Allison engines. Each hums with enough horsepower and gleams with enough chrome to make any muscle-car enthusiast envious. The brass and chrome on deck are equally impressive and show few signs of the workhorse's 30 years of service. "Keeping everything clean reduces sanding and painting time," said Seaman Ryan Romig, who understands the value of paying his dues. "Good weather like this means we stay at the dock, and it's no fun sitting at the dock."

Training exercises help break up the monotonous dock duty. On an afternoon outing, one unlucky subject plays the role of an inept Gilligan (a.k.a. Bob Denver) and goes overboard frequently. Luckily for her, trained Coasties are nearby (never mind the fact that they're also the ones who pushed her over).

"Bridget" is a training dummy that is cast into the ocean so boatswains can practice their approaches and crew members can work on their grappling and landing skills. It also gets everyone out on the Pacific on a near-perfect day. And that ain't bad, either.

Chief Warrant Officer Scott Clendenin knows the spectrum of the Coast Guard's ebbs and flows. His retirement party is planned for August, and 24 years of experience allows him to wax philosophically. "The Coast Guard's job is to make sure these people get back home to their families after being out at sea," he said, gazing upon the bay. "Saving lives makes all the long training and cold nights worthwhile." □

Article design: Holly K. Soria

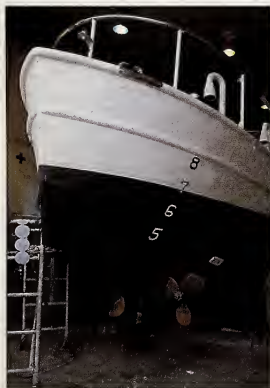


A personnel exchange with the 210-foot cutter *Steadfast* gets dicey as the Pacific rolls a bit during the crossover.

Seamen Ryan Romig and Brandi Gimse save "Bridget," a dummy that has fallen into the drink once again.



Yaquina Bay averages 600 cases annually, which range from saving sinking ships to securing skiffs and conducting safety inspections.



Above: The gleaming twin Detroit Diesel Allison engines yield no sign of their 30 years of service.

Left: According to the Yaquina Bay Coast Guard, *Victory* (built in 1956), is the oldest steel, motor lifeboat still in service.

The Surfman's Muster

Many Coasties stationed at Yaquina Bay dream of someday becoming surfmen – the boat driver qualified for any bad-weather condition. A plaque honoring the station's surfmen is accompanied with a creed entitled "The Surfman's Muster," which effectively captures the essence of the position:

"Motor lifeboats fulfill their function under conditions, which for other craft and equipment, are regarded as extreme – to be avoided if possible. Thus the concept of acceptable risk of failure cannot apply. It is when other vessels have failed that the motor lifeboat must work."

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IT'S OK TO DISCUSS ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

*The condition no one
would talk about is now a
multibillion-dollar business.*

By Layne Cameron
Associate Editor

TEN YEARS AGO, erectile dysfunction was a condition few men discussed. Yet it was a condition millions of men suffered from. "According to the 'Massachusetts Male Aging Study' published in 1994, approximately 30 million men suffer from some degree of erectile dysfunction," says Dr. Eric Grossman, medical director of Pfizer's Sexual Health Team, the pharmaceutical company based in New York City that created Viagra. As with many conditions, the incidence of ED increases with age. The odds of a 40-year-old suffering from the condition are 1 in 20; those numbers increase to nearly 1 in 5 for men over 65.

It seems the taboo was lessened when retired Sen. Bob Dole said he took Viagra to treat ED, a side effect from his prostate cancer operation. "He gave the issue the importance it deserved," says Grossman. Soon after his disclosure, millions of men realized it was OK to talk about both erectile dysfunction and Viagra. More importantly, they could seek treatment for their condition.

VA has not been immune to the tidal wave of requests for Viagra, either. In a VA statement issued in 1998, then-Undersecretary Dr.

Kenneth Kizer said, "VA projects that the cost of providing Viagra could exceed \$280 million annually, which would represent more than a

fifth of VA's total pharmaceutical budget."

According to Kizer, the costs kept VA from adding the drug to its formulary (master drug list), but VA could not deny the effectiveness of the drug. It did not ban the use of Viagra, saying if there was an "overwhelming therapeutic rationale to use Viagra, network officials may decide to provide the drug 'off-formulary.'"

*"The odds of a
40-year-old suffering
from the condition
are 1 in 20; those
numbers increase
to nearly 1 in 5 for
men over 65."*

According to Dr. Lionel Solersh, medical director of the Augusta, Ga., VA Medical Center Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Team, erectile dysfunction is a common side effect of PTSD. "The difficulty with anxiety, distractibility or depression that goes along with PTSD," says Solersh, "is that it commonly has a direct impact on sexual performance."

A veteran can receive four Viagra tablets through the non-formulary request process. "VA needs to treat ED as it would any problem that afflicts veterans and provide the best possible

resources, such as medication and counseling to improve their quality of life," says Jacqueline Garrick, The American Legion's deputy director of Health Care, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

VA's Strategic Healthcare Group and Medical Advisory Panel notes that years ago, a patient suffering from erectile dysfunction routinely went to a psychiatrist to seek a cure for his condition. The medical panel's Web site (www.dppm.med.va.gov), however, dispels the misconception that ED was simply a psychological disorder: "It was found that 85 percent of men with erectile dysfunction had physical problems." Through studies, doctors were able to note arterial damage, vein closure or nerve damage.

This revelation, that the penis must have sufficient nerve impulses and blood flow to overcome ED, spurred pharmaceutical companies racing to find a remedy.

Viagra was certainly the first oral prescription, but it is only the beginning. (According to BBC News, using Viagra to treat ED came by accident. Scientists in Kent, England, were looking for a drug to treat angina. Viagra, they learned, had the peculiar side-effect of causing erections.) There are many alternatives in the works, ready to grab a share of this growing market. The flurry of research and the race to create tomorrow's equivalent to Viagra have many urologists calling this a revolutionary time.

Questions should be asked by your doctor, however, before taking any "revolutionary" medicine. A news release issued by the Arnot Ogden Medical Center, Elmira, N.Y., recommends having a complete history and exam. Men who have conditions such as arrhythmia, arteriosclerosis, sickle cell anemia, leukemia or an abnormally shaped penis may be unable to take Viagra.

Articles appearing in many publications offer an inkling to what looms on the treatment horizon, from pills to nasal sprays to creams. Industry experts predict the demand for these products (fueled by aging Baby Boomers) will continue to increase. "Viagra has really pushed the acceptance of ED and sexual health into the practice of medicine with both private



ED could indicate other problems

Erectile dysfunction may actually be an early indicator of a more serious medical condition. According to the "Massachusetts Male Aging Study," conducted by the New England Research Institute in 1994, erectile dysfunction was "significantly correlated" with hypertension and with the medications taken to treat hypertension.

For veterans, ED may signify a service-connected condition. "ED tends to be a secondary condition to other illnesses or disorders like prostate cancer or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which can be service-connected conditions," says Jacqueline Garrick, The American Legion's deputy director of Health Care, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

A release published by Pfizer, Inc. (creator of Viagra), "Facts About ED," details a few of the risk factors associated with the condition:

Arteriosclerosis, or clogged arteries, affects approximately 50 percent of men over 50 and 70 percent

of men over 60.

Diabetes, which can affect both vascular and neurologic systems, is a common condition associated with erectile dysfunction. Nearly 50 percent of men suffering from diabetes are also affected by erectile dysfunction.

Kidney disease is also associated with the condition. Nearly half of male patients with uremia, a toxic condition resulting from kidney disease, and 75 percent of dialysis-dependent men experience erectile dysfunction.

Other conditions include depression, endocrine abnormalities and injuries, such as spinal cord, pelvic and urologic.

Seeing a doctor is the first step. According to Pfizer's literature, the diagnosis for erectile dysfunction is fairly routine: "Most patients can be diagnosed with ED on the basis of a standard medical evaluation, which may include a sexual history, a checkup and/or filling out a simple questionnaire."

—L.C.

and government physicians," says Grossman.

According to VA's chief consultant for Pharmacy Benefits Management, John Ogden, the continued demand for information on erectile dysfunction has prompted VA to review its policy. "In July or August, we are going to

look at patients using the drug and evaluate the clinical outcome," says Ogden. "We will share our lessons learned with health-care providers. Safety is a big issue, and we want to go about this the right way."

Article design: Doug Rollison

PLAYING THE VA GAME

Obtaining benefits requires more than a shake of the dice.

By John Fales

SECURING VETERANS' benefits requires skill, determination, teamwork and endurance. In many cases, a veteran fails to follow the complicated game rules and has to start all over again.

If the process sounds at all familiar, it should, because applying for and getting VA benefits is not unlike running the gauntlet

of a boot-camp obstacle course. It's a process that leaves many veterans exhausted and every veteran wondering if VA is there to serve or to frustrate.

PLODDING THROUGH

Throughout the decades, veterans have had to plod through a maze of bureaucratic roadblocks and surprises before receiving the benefits they deserved. Every generation has been forced to walk this maze: World War I veterans marched on Washington in hopes of securing the





bonuses they were promised; veterans exposed to ionizing radiation and Agent Orange waited and fought for years before they were granted their benefits; and now Gulf War veterans who suffer from chronic disabilities resulting from undiagnosed illnesses are facing the same obstacles.

Although the process is laborious and frustrating, the good news is that many of these veterans are now receiving compensation and medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs. But it takes time and patience.

Since they are based on laws, regulations, mid-stream policy directives and VA's own interpretations, veterans' benefits are always changing. A benefit that may not be available today could be available tomorrow. By the same token, just because a benefit or program is here today doesn't assure that it will be forever.

For instance, significant changes continue to be made in VA medical-care eligibility. In 1996, Congress established a system in which seven "priority groups" would be eligible for VA medical care. The intent of Congress was to eliminate complicated eligibility rules and ensure that VA resources are focused on veterans with the greatest need for VA care.

However, according to Jacqueline Garrick, deputy director for health care at the Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, priority funding may change from year to year. Last year, groups considered

VA Home Loan Contact Numbers

St. Petersburg, Fla., 888-611-5916;
Atlanta, 888-768-2132; Roanoke, Va.,
800-933-5499; Manchester, N.H.,
603-666-7502; Houston, 888-232-
2571; Phoenix, 888-869-0194; Denver,
888-349-7541; St. Paul, Minn., 800-
827-0611; Cleveland, 800-759-5772

"priority" were expanded.

Group 1 includes veterans with service-connected disabilities of 50 percent or more.

Group 2 comprises veterans with service-connected disabilities between 30 and 40 percent.

Group 3 includes former POWs, veterans discharged due to a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, veterans disabled due to treatment or rehabilitation, and veterans with service-connected disabilities of 10 or 20 percent.

Veterans receiving aid or household benefits and veterans considered "catastrophically disabled" fall into **Group 4**.

Veterans with nonservice-connected disabilities and veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 0 percent whose net worth is below established dollar levels fall into **Group 5**.

Group 6 includes World War I and Mexican Border War veterans, and veterans receiving care only for disorders associated with exposure to toxic

substances or radiation, or for illnesses associated with Persian Gulf deployment. Finally, **Group 7** includes nonservice-connected veterans with income and net worth above established dollar levels, who pay specified co-payments.

"Legislation in the last few years has made significant changes to benefits and health care available through VA," said Garrick. "Veterans who have not sought services from VA since these changes went into effect should contact VA or a Legion Department Service Officer to explore which VA resources are available to them," she said.

Other benefits, besides medical, available to eligible veterans include: disability compensation, pensions, education and training, vocational rehabilitation, home loan guarantees, life insurance, burial, survivors' assistance and dependents' education. There are homeless veterans programs and benefits for special groups, such as blinded veterans, veterans with spinal cord injuries and veterans in need of prosthetic services.

More detailed information about these and many other VA programs can be found in the VA handbook, "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents." To receive a copy, log on to VA's website at www.va.gov or write VA at Department of Veterans Affairs, Public Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20420.

THE BIG THREE

Three programs stand out from the others due to their sheer size and popularity: VA's home loan, education and employment programs.

■ **Home Loans.** The home-loan program helps eligible veterans become homeowners. It seeks to close the

credit gap and balance the scales for veterans. According to VA's "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents" handbook, veterans may obtain loan guaranties through VA for the purchase of homes, condominiums and manufactured homes. In addition, loans can be used to build, repair or refinance a home or manufactured housing. VA loans can even be used for weatherization.

According to Bob Finneran, VA's assistant director for loan policy and valuation, VA home loans require no down payment unless the home's purchase price exceeds VA's appraisal of the home. Moreover, "the VA guaranty is seen as mortgage insurance from the lender's standpoint," Finneran said.

Interest rates are very competitive since they are market-driven. They currently range between 8 and 8.25 percent, according to Finneran, who added, "The lender and the veteran can also negotiate the rate."

Most veterans are eligible for VA home loan assistance regardless of how long they have been separated from the service. To be eligible, the applicant must have a good credit rating, sufficient income to support the mortgage payment and must intend to live in the property. The veteran must also have been discharged "under other than dishonorable conditions."

Active-duty personnel are eligible for a home loan upon serving continuously for 90 days. People who have served at least six years in the reserves or National Guard are also eligible, though the eligibility period expired Oct. 28, 1999.

Eligibility even extends to unremarried spouses of veterans or reservists who died on active duty or as a result of their service; spouses of MIAs and POWs; and U.S. citizens who served in an Allied military during World War II.

Finneran said, "Theoretically,

VA home loans can be for any amount, but as a practical matter, most lenders limit the amount to \$203,000." That amount is imposed by market forces, not VA, Finneran adds.

To apply for a home loan, Finneran encourages veterans to apply first for a certificate of eligibility. This application is available from mortgage companies, realtors and VA regional offices. It can also be downloaded from the VA website. VA calls it Form 26-1880.

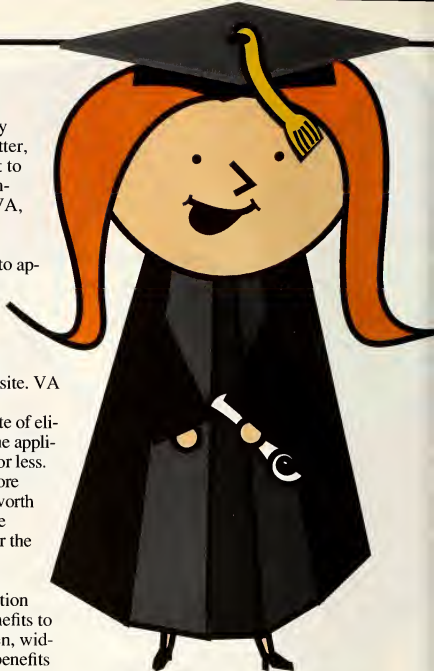
After obtaining the certificate of eligibility, a veteran can expect the application process to take 30 days or less.

To date, VA has secured more than 15.3 million home loans worth \$562 billion. See the VA Home Loan contact list on page 27 for the nearest office.

■ **Education.** The VA Education Service offers a variety of benefits to veterans, reservists, guardsmen, widows and orphans. Education benefits for military service date back to the beginning of the 20th century, though the most noteworthy education benefit was the 1944 GI Bill of Rights which educated 7.8 million World War II veterans alone. That bill was literally written by American Legion Past National Commander Harry Colmery, who drafted the first version of the legislation on hotel stationery Dec. 15, 1943. The GI Bill was signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt just six months later. It remains the Legion's greatest single legislative achievement. In addition to GI Bill benefits, today's education programs include the Montgomery GI Bill for individuals who entered active duty after June 30, 1985. This is

an insurance-style education assistance program, which allows participating service members to have their military pay reduced for a period of 12 months in exchange for education assistance upon being honorably discharged. The veteran can use this benefit for graduate, undergraduate, certificate, technical, correspondence or apprenticeship programs. He or she can also use the benefit for tutorial assistance.

The amount of a Montgomery GI Bill benefit depends upon how long the veteran served and participated in the



VA Game Rules

■ VA can be reached from anywhere in the United States by dialing toll-free **800-827-1000**. The best times to call are before 9 a.m. and after 2 p.m. EST. Have a claim number and any reference material ready before calling.

■ Keep your mailing address current with VA.

■ Follow up on any reported change with a written notice and retain a copy for your records. Call VA if the change has not been effected within 60 days. Address changes, direct-deposit or bank account changes, and changes in the number or status of dependents must be confirmed in writing.

■ When calling about a specific program, ask to speak to the program coordinator. For example, there are programs for homeless veterans, women veterans, military services and POWs, just to name a few.

■ If you experience difficulty with a VA counselor, ask to speak with a supervisor.

■ File any claims to establish service-connected disabilities as soon as possible after separation from active duty. It is very difficult to attribute a disability 20 years from separation to something that occurred on active duty.

■ Maintain accurate records of dates and locations of treatment while you were on active duty, as well as private medical care received. When possible, provide copies of private treatment records.

■ Be realistic in your expectations of the agency. Remember, VA processes thousands of claims, and claims-processing times vary based on many factors, such as complexity of the claim,

availability of records and scheduling of physical examinations.

■ VA benefit information is available from numerous sources in addition to the department. But be sure you are receiving accurate information – if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. So don't be afraid to question and verify the information you hear with a VA official.

■ If you believe you are entitled or know someone who may be entitled to benefits, contact a Department Service Officer at The American Legion, your congressman or someone at the nearest VA regional office. A DSO can be found on The American Legion homepage at www.legion.org, or by calling **800-433-3318**. It is always best to file a claim for benefits with the assistance of a DSO.

■ The latest information on VA benefits is only a mouse click away when you visit the VA homepage at www.va.gov.

■ Veterans should also ensure their disability claims are current. If a veteran's service-connected disability increases, he or she should file for an increase in compensation. For instance, a veteran with service-connected diabetes who later experiences blindness because of the service-connected disease is eligible to be compensated additionally for blindness.

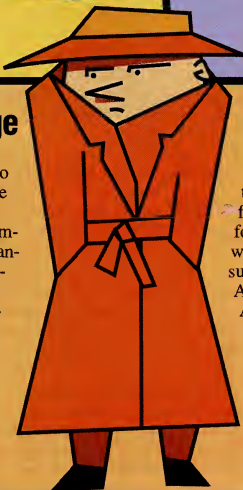
■ Veterans nearing the benefit finish line should remember that VA maintains national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico. The National Cemetery Administration of VA honors eligible veterans with a final resting place. It is important that veterans make sure their military and VA records are safe, current and available to their loved ones so that when the time comes, burial preparations can be made appropriately and expeditiously.

■ **Final Rule:** Players of the VA Game are allowed to keep playing until they win.

Good News on Agent Orange

As a result of Agent Orange studies, nine diseases which may not be directly traceable to military service were added to the presumptive list. They include: chloracne, Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, porphyria cutanea tarda, respiratory cancers (lung, bronchus, larynx and trachea), soft-tissue sarcoma, acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy and prostate cancer. Due to a finding of "limited or suggestive evidence" of an association between spina bifida and herbicides, children of Vietnam veterans who have spina bifida are provided monetary benefits, health care and vocational rehabilitation service.

Researchers at the Institute of Medicine



are currently reviewing material that considers a possible link between Agent Orange and diabetes.

And in February 1999, a technicality that kept some Vietnam veterans from receiving disability compensation for problems caused by Agent Orange was struck down in a legal challenge supported by The American Legion. About 1,000 veterans have been denied Agent Orange-related VA benefits because they didn't write "Agent Orange" or "herbicide" on a form when applying for disability compensation. A federal judge ruled that veterans couldn't be denied benefits solely because they didn't insert those specific words on the form.

program, according to Bill Susling, an education advisor at VA's Education Service.

For example, if the veteran participated and served the usual two years, the benefit would be \$436 per month for a full-time student. If the veteran served and participated longer, the benefit could be \$536 per month. In addition, "The Department of Defense supplements the program for veterans with military occupational specialties that are hard to fill, which can take the total benefit up to \$1,400," Suslin said.

Reservists can also tap into VA's education benefits. According to VA's benefit handbook, "To be eligible, a reservist must have a six-year obligation to serve in the Selected Reserve (signed after June 30, 1985)." A reserve officer must agree to serve six years in addition to his or her original commitment.

The best way to access VA's education benefits depends on



Ionizing Radiation

Factors determining service-connection compensation for veterans exposed to ionizing radiation include the amount of radiation exposure, duration of exposure, and elapsed time between exposure and onset of the disease.

The conditions presumed to be service-connected are all forms of leukemia (except chronic lymphocytic leukemia) and cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract, multiple myeloma, and primary liver cancer and lymphomas (other than Hodgkin's disease).



where a veteran is in his or her education career. "A Montgomery Bill participant who knows where he or she is going to school should talk with the school's financial aid office," Susling instructed. The financial aid office can then refer the veteran to the school's certifying office, which can guide him or her through the process.

Susling encouraged veterans who have yet to decide on their schools to file an application with VA. Approval will take at least four weeks and can be longer during the traditional August rush, Susling adds. The VA Education Service can answer specific questions at 888-442-4551.

■ **Employment.** VA also can help with employment training, vocational rehabilitation and counseling. To be eligible, veterans must meet three conditions: They must have service-connected disabilities sustained during active service and rated at 20 percent or higher; they must be discharged or awaiting separation because of a service-related disability (they must not have been dishonorably discharged); and finally, as VA's benefit handbook explains, veterans must show that rehabilitation is needed "to overcome an employment handicap caused substantially from a service-connected disability."

With those conditions met, veter-

ans can receive rehabilitation, counseling and training. VA will pay for tuition, books, supply fees, tutorial assistance, prosthetic devices and special support such as sign-language training and lip-reading training. VA added that it will also "help the veteran pay for at least part of the transportation expenses unique to disabled persons during training."

Veterans who have been awarded disability compensation automatically receive a vocational-rehabilitation application, according to Jim Reed, a counseling psychologist at VA headquarters in Washington. An application can be obtained by phone or in person at VA's regional offices. Once the application is completed, the veteran is evaluated to determine which service is best for him or her.

"The program is very individualized. It's a one-on-one review of background and military history," according to Reed. "Our program helps veterans understand their strengths and

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Gulf War Illness

Gulf War veterans may receive disability compensation for chronic disabilities resulting from undiagnosed illnesses. These illnesses must have appeared during active duty in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War or to a 10-percent degree through Jan. 1, 2002.

A disability is considered chronic if it has existed for at least six months. The following symptoms may be evidence of an undiagnosed illness: fatigue, skin disorders, headache, muscle pain, neurological symptoms, neuro-psychological symptoms, symptoms involving the respiratory system, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal symptoms, cardiovascular symptoms, abnormal weight loss and menstrual disorders.



VA care delivery locations nationwide."

Last year, the VHA finally received a much-needed increase in funding. Additionally, Congress initiated and passed — and the president signed into law — the "Veterans' Millennium Health Care Act of 1999," PL106-117.

The measure was authored by Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla., who is chairman of the Veterans' Health Subcommittee. According to Stearns, "This new law provides a blueprint for enhancing and expanding health care for America's veterans, preparing the VA for the challenges of a new century."

The legislation opens the door to expanded long-term care and greater access to outpatient care and improved benefits overall, including emergency-care coverage for veterans enrolled in VA.

The law promises to improve access to long-term care for the most severely disabled veterans and expand VA's obligation to provide alternatives to nursing-home care. The measure authorizes VA to pay reasonable emergency-care costs to veterans who obtain their general medical care from VA. It establishes new authority for VA to provide care to TRICARE-eligible military retirees and Purple Heart recipients who otherwise lack priority for VA care.

The VA Game is challenging and sometimes downright rough. But veterans who keep these rules in mind and follow the path of those who have gone ahead of them just might be able to win. □

John Fales writes about veterans' issues for The Washington Times under the pseudonym "Sgt. Shaft." He is a disabled Vietnam veteran and president of the Blinded American Veterans Foundation. Associate Editor Alan W. Dowd contributed to this report.

Article design and illustrations: Holly K. Soria

weaknesses and gives them a range of choices, from training to counseling to equipment," Reed said.

Knowing that veterans have waited long enough, VA's rehabilitation programs seek to respond rapidly. "Our goal is to respond to the veteran in 60 days — from submission of the application to the decision," said Reed. Last year, the program placed 10,281 veterans, according to Reed.

Veterans can learn more about this program at 800-827-1000.

THE EARLIER THE BETTER

Dr. Thomas L. Garthwaite, VA's acting undersecretary for health, urged veterans new to the VA benefits process to enroll early. "Don't wait until you are sick. Call us now and ask to be enrolled and to have a primary care appointment," he said.

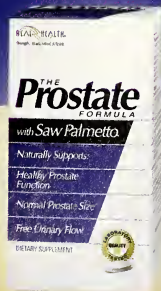
"Many conditions can be prevented or effectively treated if detected early. Don't rely on old negative impressions of the VA health-care system," he added. "Eighty percent of veterans say we are better than just two years ago."

Garthwaite also noted that "Veterans today can obtain health services in 1,200

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FOCUS ON VA

Togo West calls on VA to be 'advocate.'

AT 57, TOGO West is already a Washington veteran, having served under Presidents Ford, Carter and Clinton. Although he was appointed VA secretary in 1998, his service under President Clinton dates back to the very beginning of the Clinton administration, when West was appointed Secretary of the Army.

The Army veteran and former judge advocate helped kick off The American Legion's Washington Conference with a no-nonsense

speech that highlighted the challenges and opportunities facing veterans and VA today. He also saluted the Legion for its efforts to protect the American Flag. "Thank you for your defense of this nation's flag," he said at the conclusion of his remarks. Afterward, Associate Editor Alan W. Dowd had an opportunity to talk with West.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE: VA has told some veterans that they need "well-grounded claims" before they can receive assistance in the claims process. What are your thoughts on the legislation proposed by Rep. Lane Evans, which would require VA to assist veterans in preparing claims?

TOGO WEST: We thought we had processing of well-grounded claims fairly well laid out. Then the Court in *Morton vs. West* changed the rules on us. The Court says you cannot expend resources that are needed by VA to process the claims of deserving veterans for processing claims that are not well-grounded. We are here to be forward-



Togo West – Veteran of three presidential administrations



Togo West greets PNC Tony Jordan after speaking to Legionnaires at the Washington Conference.

1942: Born in Winston-Salem, N.C.

1965: Graduated from Howard University in Washington, D.C.; commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Field Artillery Corps.

1968: Earned law degree from Howard University; served as law clerk to Judge Harold Tyler Jr. in the U.S. District Court for the Second District of New York.

1969: Called to active-duty service in the Army's Judge Advocate General Corps; served in the Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

1973: Practiced law with the Washington firm of Covington and Burling.

1975: Joined the Ford administration as associate deputy attorney general.

1977: Joined the Carter administration as general counsel for the Navy.

1979: Served as special assistant to the secretary and deputy secretary of defense.

1980: Appointed by President Carter as general counsel of the Department of Defense.

1981: Named managing partner of Washington offices of the law firm of Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler.

1990: Accepted position as senior vice president for government relations with the Northrop Corp.

1993: Appointed by President Clinton as secretary of the Army.

1998: Sworn in as secretary of Veterans Affairs.

leaning on behalf of veterans. We're not just judges – we're advocates, too. We are successful in our job when a veteran collects his or her claim and receives his or her benefit. So how do we reconcile this? Well, we've gone through a regulation-writing process to implement this decision. We're now working through the review process. We'll sit down and meet with representatives of the Legion and other veterans service organizations to see if we can work out any differences they have.

We have a duty to assist veterans. With regard to Congressman Evans' bill, our view is, "Fine, but let's see how our regulatory process works first."

Q: What is the current status of VA's modernization efforts to assist adjudicators in speeding up the claims process?

A: First, there's a long-range fix – that is, moving the claims process to an electronic environment. This is something that will permanently change the way claims are processed. What we have is a demonstration process to see if we can make this work.

Think about the benefits of doing this in a computerized environment: Veterans wouldn't have to worry about a document getting lost; it would be easier to deal with questions of access. It's easier said than done, but we're going to keep funding it.

Second, if we're going to have an impact right now, we want to add personnel to beef up the system. There are some difficulties with that: People have to be trained, and that's probably why

we haven't seen the impact yet from the 440 new personnel we've authorized. We're still hiring them. But that will kick in sooner than the electronic solution. These personnel increases will have an impact this year. My belief is that the principle difficulty is training. But once we get that done, we will be over the hump. And we've already seen signs of improvement.

Q: The administration's VA budget for major and minor construction is \$62 million and \$162 million respectively. This is well short of The American Legion recommendation of \$200 million for each of these budgets. Our experts tell us various VA facilities require significant clinical and ambulatory care renovations to accommodate the recent increases in primary care. Won't delaying needed construction and renovation projects wind up costing the government more in the long run?

A: You're absolutely right: The longer it takes, the more it's going to cost. We're going to face up to the challenges we have in modernization. We earmarked \$10 million for an initiative which is looking at all of our facilities and asking this question: "Do we have ourselves organized correctly in terms of facilities to deliver health care to veterans in this coming millennium?"

So we're looking at how we can put our specialties in a place that's accessible to as many as possible. That study is going to be significant as we modernize.

Q: Is there a plan or proposal to close any one of VA's 172 hospitals in the near future?

A: I know of no plans to close any hospitals. Fort Lyons is a nursing home in Colorado that we were going to transfer to the state, but that is being held up right now.

While we are moving some activities at certain centers to outpatient clinics, that doesn't mean those particular centers will close. What we're trying to do is organize health care in each part of the country so that we can get it closer to the veterans.

Q: What are your thoughts on leasing VA hospital space to private health-care providers to generate revenue, as is being proposed in Reno, Nevada?

A: Well, Congress intends for us to do it. Congress has granted leasing authority with the idea that there might be space in our facilities that can be shared so that funds from leasing can be funneled back into the medical center.

We will do whatever is necessary that offers the possibility of improving health-care services and access. And if we have the space, then we're not going to let it stand still. If it stands vacant, it is a waste of assets that we could be putting into service for veterans.

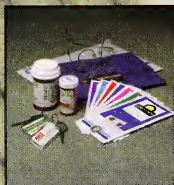
Q: Medicare and Social Security continue to pay benefits to those who suffer from tobacco-related illnesses. With VA now denying these claims, how do you respond to concerns that

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veterans are given lesser treatment than those enrolled in other programs? Would you support reinstating the past policy of funding these claims?

A: We provide care for a lot of tobacco-related illnesses that come in as part of some other service-connected disability. I don't think it is true that they are getting any less care. They're getting better care than those who do not have access to the VA system. I don't think that is a problem the way that it's been described.

I think the possibility of changing that policy is not in the cards. We're comfortable that veterans with tobacco-related illness are getting great care.

Q: During your remarks at the Washington Conference, you saluted the Legion for its role in trying to protect the American Flag. Does this mean that you support SJR 14, the flag-protection amendment?

A: Remember the secretary of Veterans Affairs and the president don't have a role in constitutional amendments. So, I'm not going to get myself involved in

that. Let's face it – I've got an administration that's come out very clearly in opposition to a constitutional amendment. My reaction to that is, "That's what they said." But I feel fairly strongly about this. So I am not going to take a position in opposition to the Legion or anyone else with respect to that.

Q: As you reflect on the last seven years, what are some of the highlights of your service at VA and the Pentagon?

A: No one can ignore as an achievement the budget we just brought in – a \$1.5 billion increase in funding. But I do think that the National Shrine Commitment is a highlight. Our national cemeteries are places where we bury our veterans; the ground is hallowed by their sacrifice. They are designed to be places where families can come and visit their loved ones and where visitors can come and reflect upon the simple virtues – patriotism, love of country, commitment to an ideal. And yet some parks are in disrepair. There are sections where grave markers have sunk below ground, where there's been water damage or where roads have deteriorated.

Will we ever get to the point where they reflect the same kind of care and love as our cemeteries in Europe? Why shouldn't our families, our veterans have access to that here in the United States? In that \$13 million increase I mentioned, there's a \$5 million National Shrine Fund commitment – the first time we've ever included anything like that in the budget. But \$5 million cannot possibly cover all that's needed.

So, I hope the Legion and all of us who care for and about veterans will ask this question of my successors: "Mr. Secretary, where is the funding for the National Shrine Commitment?" It is going to take some doing over the years to keep it funded. But there are some other things we are proud of: The whole notion that there is a moratorium on new national cemeteries is gone; so-called talk of a flat budget is gone; we're thinking about ways to expand health care, not reduce it.

There's a whole new spirit in the Department and among all of us who serve veterans that we can do more. And we've got the resources to do it.

Article design: Holly K. Soria

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Museum visitors pass by a Chinese missile at the Beijing Military Museum February 23. The Clinton administration expressed concern over a warning by China that it could use force if Taiwan delays indefinitely reunification talks with Bei-

jing. U.S. diplomats relayed the administration's concerns to Chinese authorities in Beijing and Washington just a day after China issued the threat in an 11,000-word position paper.

COMMANDER SLAMS CHINA APPEASEMENT

Trade bill heads to Senate as GOP leaders, Lance exchange salvos.

By Alan W. Dowd
Associate Editor

THE U.S. HOUSE of Representatives approved Permanent Normalized Trade Relations with China, or PNTR, by the surprisingly wide margin of 237-197. The bill immediately headed to the Senate, where it was also expected to pass this summer. The American Legion had strongly opposed the measure, a fact underscored by a unanimous vote of the National Executive Committee in May.

Key Senate leaders, among them Max Baucus, D-Mont., and Tom Daschle, D-S.D., have called for debate to be muzzled and "fast-tracked" in the normally deliberative body. The NEC, however, would not be muzzled and

issued a clear statement on the matter.

In a surprising move, some of the bill's supporters used its passage in the House as an opportunity to lecture The American Legion – the nation's largest veterans' organization – on "American values in China."

In a letter released after their dubious victory, 39 Republican congressmen said they were "extremely disappointed to learn of the Legion's decision to oppose the U.S.-Sino commercial relationship at this historical juncture." (See page 40 for the full text of their letter.)

"Rebuking China as it opens to the West would be a terrible mistake and

counterproductive to increasing freedom," they wrote in the tersely worded, six-paragraph letter.

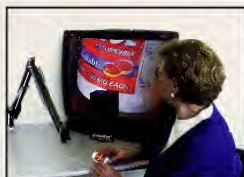


A state police officer stands in front of a well-known American corporate logo in Shanghai, providing a stark reminder of America's global economic reach and China's resistance to change.

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One of the letter's co-signers, Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-N.J., even lashed out at John Jefferson, assistant director at the Legion's Legislative Division in Washington. "The American Legion should have stayed out of this," said Frelinghuysen, who added, "A lot of members are very displeased."

But National Commander Al Lance was quick to counterpunch. "Before they criticize The American Legion for the unanimous vote taken by the NEC," Lance admonished, "I would ask them to consider history and reconsider their own position. We should not be so willing to sell out to American business interests and the Chinese communists."

Strange Bedfellows. Joining the Legion in opposing the bill is an unusual coalition of groups, including labor, environmental organizations, human-rights advocates, churches, small businesses and organizations with long-standing worries about China's threatening military posture. The diverse alliance comprises the U.S. Catholic Conference, Southern Baptist Convention, AFL-CIO, Sierra Club and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The bill's proponents have tried to counter the Legion and other opponents by arguing that full-blown U.S.-China trade would become a virtual panacea for all of China's ills, whether military, environmental or political.

But citing recent history, Lance disagreed. "As a Most Favored Nation trading partner," observed Lance, "the government of China has antagonized Taiwan, stolen U.S. nuclear-weapons secrets, attempted to influence U.S. elections, trampled on the human rights of its countrymen and refused to cooperate on the accounting of missing American POWs."

Lance also invoked some of the darkest chapters in American history to frame the Legion's reservations about the bill. "We should keep in mind Chinese involvement in past conflicts," Lance said. "During the Korean War, it was the Chinese who ran the prison camps. Many of our missing personnel from the Vietnam War went down in Chinese-held territory. And there are still 130 military personnel who served during the Cold War who are unaccounted for. The Chinese have information on these MIAs and POWs."

Lance, who at press time was resigned to the bill's ultimate passage, expressed puzzlement over the rush to

A letter to the Legion from 39 Republican members of Congress

Dear Commander Lance:

As members of Congress, many of whom are veterans, we were extremely disappointed to learn of the Legion's decision to oppose the U.S.-Sino commercial relationship at this historical juncture. Since American Legion members are recognized as fighters for freedom throughout the world, we had hoped you would be joining us in recognizing the importance of maintaining normal trade relations for the advancement of American values in China.

Without a doubt, the continuation of strong commercial relations is key to promoting the core American values in China of economic and political freedoms. This is best exemplified in a recent article from *The Washington Post*, with statements from leading dissidents who suffer the repression of the Chinese government yet strongly support permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) for China.

Democracy activist Martin Lee in Hong Kong, Chinese dissident Tong Bao, Taiwan's President-elect Chen Shui-bian, Rev. Billy Graham and many other human rights and democracy activists throughout the world understand that rebuking China as it opens to the West would be a terrible mistake and counterproductive to increasing freedom.

Market reform is the most powerful force for positive change in China's 5,000 year history. Tools to promote market reforms, like PNTR and China's WTO membership, will undermine both the political and economic monopolies that repress the Chinese people.

In the 20 years since Deng Xiaoping introduced market reform in China, the residual economic growth has lifted millions of hardworking people from desperate poverty. More recently, the introduction of the Internet has allowed the Chinese people to access outside information and Western ideals. The Chinese people are now offered more choices and opportunities than ever before – and that is a giant step forward for human freedom.

Enhanced commercial relations with the U.S. will strengthen the independence and improve the lives of the Chinese people, with higher salaries, better benefits and greater exposure to Western values like rule of law, judicial independence and fair business practices. There is no better way to foster change in China than to create an environment where freedom can flourish.

pass the PNTR bill now, since a year-to-year review of China's trade status has worked effectively to date. He speculated that the timing could be related to the forthcoming publication of the final results of the espionage and campaign-finance investigations.

Lance called the annual debate and vote on trade with China, America's "only non-military leverage with Beijing. If this passes the Senate, we will have no other way to respond to China except military force."

Just two weeks before the House vote, the NEC urged Congress to lay down a number of markers to determine when unfettered trade with

China should begin.

The United States should delay permanent normal trade relations with China, the NEC said, until Beijing recognizes Taiwan's right to self-determination; fully cooperates on the accounting of American servicemen missing from the Korean War, Vietnam War and the Cold War; abandons its designs on dominating Asia; observes human rights; and permits religious freedom.

Pulling no punches, Lance concluded, "We should not do business with the enemy until these issues are addressed."

Article design: Doug Rollison

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

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Forgiving debt proposed

While America still struggles with a national debt of \$5.7 trillion (\$20,000 per person), a major campaign is underway to forgive the debts of Third World countries. It is led by a conservative legislator, Rep. Spencer Bachus, R-Ala., who runs the House Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy. Under his prodding, Congress has already voted \$123 million in debt relief.

Carol Welch, a member of the executive committee of Jubilee 2000, a group promoting foreign aid, puts the complete cost of the bailout at \$200 billion, while a summit of developing countries meeting in Havana says total Third World debt is more than \$2.5 trillion.

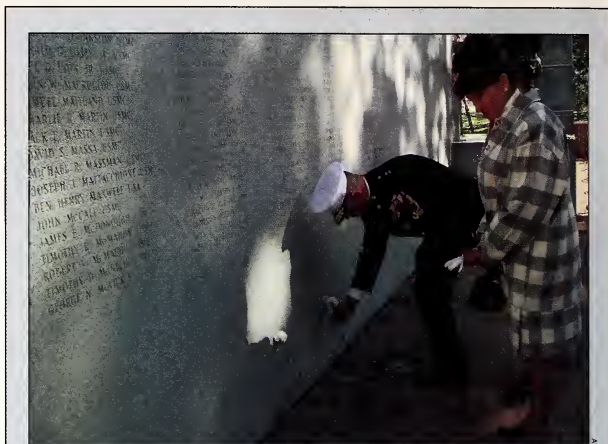
In support of the move, thousands of protesters converged in Washington, D.C., in April calling for the cancellation of the debt. AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney and White House economic adviser Gene Sperling spoke to the group. A congressional panel, the Meltzer Commission, has also called for total debt cancellation.

American imprisoned

An Army veteran who was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for more than five months on bogus drug allegations is demanding compensation and the clearing of his name. "I never was officially charged with anything," Stanley Kizzie says. "I never went before a judge. I never went to court. I never had access to a lawyer. There were no fingerprints done. There was no blood test. I had already been cleared by an investigation. Yet I stayed in prison."

Kizzie, whose case was highlighted by Amnesty International in a report critical of the Saudi human rights record, received an apology from the Saudi ambassador to Washington and has been promised a further investigation.

Since retiring from the Army in 1993, Kizzie worked in Saudi Arabia for six years without any incident. Then, in March 1999, he was prevented from boarding an airplane and accused of carrying drugs. Saudi police cleared him of the charges and released him. But he was imprisoned



Marine Maj. Gen. Emil Bedard and his wife, Linda, place flowers against the Beirut Memorial in Jacksonville, N.C. The memorial honors servicemen killed during the 1983 peacekeeping mission in Lebanon.

Family members speak against Israel deployment

Families of servicemen killed by the Syrian-backed Hezbollah 17 years ago have been speaking out against the placement of U.S. troops between Israel and Syria, proposed as part of a possible peace agreement.

At a Washington news conference, Judith Young declared, "I do not want to have any other families go through the loss and have their sons come home in a flag-draped coffin filled with body parts." Her son, Sgt. Jeffrey D. Young, was one of 241 servicemen killed when a suicide terrorist bomber destroyed the Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, Oct. 23, 1983.

"We have never had justice," she said. "We have never seen anyone take responsibility or give us any kind of justice in 17 years. I don't want this ever to happen again."

Deborah Peterson, who lost her brother, Cpl. James Chandonnet

Knipple, said, "I, for one, would not be willing to sacrifice another drop of innocent blood or another penny from my purse to purchase a false peace with Syria."

Jim Macroglou, who lost his brother, Maj. John Macroglou, in the bombing, said, "Seventeen years have gone by since my brother was killed, but the pain for my family and me is as fresh as the day we received news of his death. Please do not send other fine young men into harm's way unnecessarily."

Americans for a Safe Israel, the sponsor of the press conference, says American troops sent to the Golan Heights would be sandwiched between the military forces of Israel and Syria, just a few miles away from terrorist bases. The group predicts Syria will engineer terrorist attacks to get U.S. forces off the Golan Heights once the Israelis have withdrawn.

—C.K.

two months later on the orders of a Saudi prince and was deported last October.

"I understand the need for harmonious diplomacy," he says, referring

to how the U.S. government gingerly handled the incident. "But let's not lose our national backbone in the process."

—Cliff Kincaid

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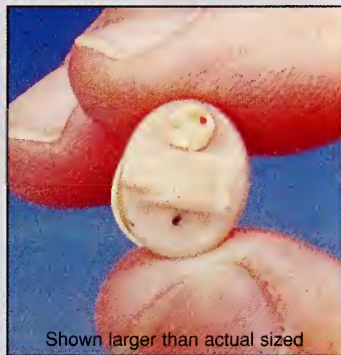
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SHOULD HANDGUN TRIGGER LOCKS BE MANDATORY?

Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas



NO I question whether the federal government should pass such laws. The Bill of Rights prohibits such action, thus there is no authority for the federal government to take such action.

I also question whether such action should be taken by state and local governments. As Benjamin

Franklin said, "Those who would surrender fundamental liberties in exchange for a little security deserve neither."

Gun control laws do not work. In places where crime rates are high, such as Washington and New York City, guns are, for all intents and purposes, banned. Still, gun crimes remain high. In Texas, where we have a concealed weapons law, and in Vermont where gun rights are strongly protected, crime rates and gun violence are greatly reduced.

Some may suggest that trigger locks are for gun safety rather than gun control, but the same principles apply: Attempts to legislate will fail.

Criminals will not worry about using illegal guns. Moreover, some people may accidentally fire a gun while trying to engage the lock, and others may be unable to defend themselves because they will not be able to expeditiously remove the lock.

The problem is that govern-

ment is assuming it knows best when history shows it generally does not. In economics we recognize the "seen and the unseen," perhaps best reflected in the idea of "opportunity cost." It is because of this principle that we should always be skeptical about those who wish to suggest that empirical data can be used to demonstrate the total impact of any policy.

This new mandate either will prevent poor people who wish to protect their families from ever buying a gun, or make criminals out of them. Simply, these people may not be able to afford a gun that meets the government standards. We should not sacrifice these people simply because they are not easily measured by bureaucrats.

In America we must protect fundamental freedoms and never allow the security of poor people to be jeopardized just so politicians can get elected and re-elected. Nor should we turn those people who live in crime ridden areas into criminals. Trigger lock mandates should be rejected by all levels of government.

Rep. Anthony David Weiner, D-N.Y.



YES We have seen too many tragic examples of what can happen when guns get into the hands of children.

From Littleton, Colo., to Washington, D.C., young people often have to look no further than their own homes to gain access to firearms.

Many parents who say they have a gun in their home admit that they do not lock their firearms away from their children. We must hold those parents accountable, but we must also give families every available tool to keep children safe from gun violence.

Every day, guns hurt or kill American children. The statistics paint a terrifying picture: Guns cause 12 percent of fatalities among American children and teens and one of every four deaths of teenagers 15 to 19. And sadly, firearms have become the primary method by which young people commit suicide.

Properly used, safety-locking devices can dramatically reduce the unauthorized use of handguns — by a child at play or a teen who wants to commit a crime. A 1991 General Accounting Office study found that one-third of the deaths resulting from accidental shootings could have been prevented by a firearm safety device such as a trigger lock.

Learning to use a locking device should take just a few minutes. With training, many locking devices can be detached within seconds allowing the authorized user quick access to his or her handgun in necessary situations. Locking devices also have the benefit of potentially preventing a gun from being used against its owner.

Under adult supervision, teaching young people respect for firearms is important in preventing tragedy later. But statistics show that extensive training about firearms does not translate into safe use or avoidance of those guns. We must do more to keep our children safe.

American families have a responsibility to keep their handguns out of the hands of children. And policymakers at every level have a responsibility to tighten our

firearm laws so that weapons are stored as safely as possible.

The time for trigger locks is now and Congress should make passage of this critical legislation a priority. Our children deserve nothing less.

"The Bill of Rights prohibits such action, thus there is no authority for the federal government to take such action."

"Learning to use a locking device should take just a few minutes. With training, many locking devices can be detached within seconds."

Your Opinions Count, Too.

Senators and representatives are interested in constituent viewpoints. You may express your views by writing The Honorable (name), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, or The Honorable (name), House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. You may call the Senate at (202) 224-3121; the House at (202) 225-3121.

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The National Executive Committee interrupted its meetings to dedicate The American Legion Marketing Services Group Building, which houses the Emblem Sales, Information Tech-

nology and Member Benefits divisions. It is also the home of Haynes and Partners Communications, the Legion's direct-mail-marketing company.

Legion to members: Vote for national security *NEC encourages Legionnaires to remember military readiness on Election Day.*

The entire American Legion family was charged by National Commander Al Lance to help get out the vote in this year's elections. Opening the National Executive Committee's Spring Meetings, held May 10-11 in Indianapolis, Lance urged members to also push national security into the limelight as a critical election issue.

"Our nation is facing a national security crisis, and most Americans don't know it," Lance pointed out. "Our military is stretched paper-thin all over the world. Over 20 percent of the total armed forces is deployed to 134 countries, while the National Guard has a presence in more than 35 countries with troops provided from 44 states."

Acting on the Commander's proposal, the National Security Commission convened an unprecedented session. Chairman Allen Titus held the National Security Forum May 9 and involved every commission to help the cause.

Inspiring the masses to vote is nothing new to the Americanism Commission. Its "Get Out the Vote" program has been a staple to the Legion's programs since shortly after the organiza-

tion's inception. Encouraging all citizens to register and vote can be facilitated through rallies, town hall meetings or forums.

Another tool to increase voter turnout is hosting a candidate debate. Some Posts shy away from this option, citing the Legion's pledge to be nonpartisan. "Yes, we are mandated to be nonpartisan," explained Americanism Chairman

"Our nation is facing a national security crisis, and most Americans don't know it."

— National Commander Al Lance

Joe Caouette. "But 'nonpartisan' doesn't mean 'uninvolved.' We are mandated to get involved in issues. Why else would we have a Legislative Commission?"

To uphold the Legion's pledge to be nonpartisan, it is important that each

candidate receive equal billing and that organized events not show favoritism. Since Posts are nonprofit organizations, Caouette said, they need to observe the rules governing tax-exempt organizations conducting election-related activities. Posts should invite all candidates on the same terms and conditions.

"The American Legion cannot and will not endorse a political candidate or party," said John Brieden, Legislative Chairman. "However, we will adamantly support or oppose positions that are inconsistent with our national legislative matters."

Building Dedication. Taking advantage of the influx of VIPs, National Headquarters took time out to dedicate the new Marketing Services Group Building, constructed on the grounds of the former Fort Benjamin Harrison. Nicknamed "Building No. 2," the facility houses Emblem Sales, Information Technology, Member Benefits and Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc., a direct-mail marketing company.

Smiling ear-to-ear as Lance cut the ribbon for the \$4 million, 65,000-

square-foot facility was Ron Brooks, Marketing Services Executive Director. "There has already been an amazing increase in efficiency," said Brooks, who has been working in the building since December 1999. "Now that we're in one location, everything from production to inventory control is up."

Productive. During the NEC meetings, the Legion's governing body passed 47 resolutions, doled out numerous awards and accepted multiple checks for various programs. (For complete copies of the resolutions, write to: The American Legion Library, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.)

Auxiliary President Elizabeth Stewart greeted the gathering in fine fashion when she presented four checks to The American Legion totaling \$60,000 (\$20,000 to Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, \$20,000 to Children & Youth, \$10,000 to the Child Welfare Foundation and \$10,000 to the Citizens Flag Alliance).

Patrick Brady, CFA's Chairman of the Board, thanked the American Legion Auxiliary and all those who have contributed to the flag-amendment effort. He was disappointed in the Senate vote, which saw the amendment miss passage by a mere four votes. He was inspired, however, by the rally organized by The American Legion. "The rally represented America in all its glory," said Brady. "There were children singing patriotic songs, Miss America and a crowd of battle-hardened veterans. It was truly moving."

Perpetuating the spirit of giving, Elmer Fuhrhop, Chairman of the Children & Youth Commission, announced the Legion's continued support for the Children's Miracle Network. The Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion plan to present CMN a check for \$1 million.

Check Presentations. Throughout the proceedings, the welcomed interruption of additional check presentations brought Lance gladly to the podium to accept the donations on behalf of the Legion. The Department of New York donated \$10,000 to the National Emergency Fund; Louisiana gave \$7,548 to the World War II Memorial. (Subsequently, the New Orleans Convention

Corporation contributed \$25,000 in Convention profits in the name of The American Legion to the D-Day Museum, New Orleans.)

In all, more than \$21,000 was raised for the NEF, while more than \$12,000 was contributed to the World War II Memorial.

Membership. Membership, as of May 9, stood at 2,615,729 with thousands more rolling in – impressive numbers for a so-called "dying organization." Innovative new programs have ensured the Legion's growing presence in the 21st century. "The Direct Membership Solicitation has acquired 90,828 members," reported Kenneth Sercherchi, Membership and Post Activities Chairman. "The 2000 goal was 88,000 new members." The Post Development program has also been prosperous, creating 78 new/revitalized Posts – 13 more than last year.

Another initiative has proven to be equally as promising – the Reconnect program. Legionnaires at all levels are getting involved with activities at military sites around the country. "By being a 'good neighbor' through reconnect efforts, The American Legion can continue that long-standing charge to provide service to the veteran, their families and the communities they live in," said Lance.

Allies, Not Adversaries. In August 1999, VA Secretary Togo West

approved an internal initiative that effectively told VA not to help veterans develop their claims at the onset of the process (see "Caring for Those Who Have Borne the Battle," page 8). "Often, veterans need a physical from VA to prove their claims are valid. 'I don't think a free physical is too much to provide someone who fought for his country!'" Lance said.

To counter VA's change of heart, the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission is lobbying for **HR 3193**, a bill to reinstate VA's duty to assist veterans. The bill was introduced by Lane Evans of Illinois, the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "Thanks to the Legion's efforts, the bill has 140 sponsors," said Thomas Cadmus, VA&R Chairman.

Lance closed the session by commending the NEC on passing a number of important resolutions, including the VA&R measure that "will not allow VA to abandon its historic relationship with veterans."

In this election year, Lance implored the board members to do their civic duty – fight for issues important to all Americans while avoiding partisanship. Said Lance, "We must leave here today and show our commitment to America by bringing people out to the polls and making our government a true representation of what our founding fathers envisioned – a government of the people, by the people, for the people."

– Layne Cameron



National Commander Al Lance speaks during the dedication of The American Legion Marketing Services Group Building.

Milwaukee: How to get there, where to stay

The American Legion will hold its 82nd National Convention in the "Genuine American City"—Milwaukee—Sept. 1-7. The city of more than 650,000 is the largest in the state of Wisconsin and the 19th most populous city in America. Thanks to numerous Legion discounts and corporate partnerships, the trip to Milwaukee should be long on fun and short on hassles, and the stay should be enjoyable and economical.

Legionnaires who plan to attend the Convention can check out the following airline, car rental and hotel discounts.

AIRLINES

Northwest Airlines' discounted airfares for the Convention are valid from Aug. 29 to Sept. 10. For tickets purchased more than 60 days prior to departure, the discount is 10 percent. For those tickets purchased less than 59 days from the time of departure, the discount is 5 percent. To make a reservation, call (800) 328-1111. The World File/Ticket Designator is NEHMU.

Midwest Express Airlines is offering a 10-percent discount on any published fare for tickets purchased more than 60 days prior to travel, and a 6-percent discount on any published fare for tickets purchased less than 60 days prior to travel. The discount is valid Aug. 28 to Sept. 10. All reservations can be made through Midwest Express Airlines at (800) 452-2022, referencing the Convention File Code #C650.

U.S. Airways' Legion discounts apply to Unrestricted Applicable "Y" Published Fare Types. The discount is 10 percent with seven days advance reservations/ticketing and 15 percent off with 60 days advance reservations/ticketing. The discount is applicable between Aug. 27 and Sept. 12. Call (877) 874-7687 and mention the Legion's Gold File Number — 71671288 — at the time of purchase.

United Airlines' Legion fares are either 5 percent off any United Airlines published fares, including First Class, or 10 percent off applicable BUA or like fares in effect when tickets are purchased seven days in advance. To reserve an airline ticket with United, refer to the Legion's Meeting ID Code 574UX and call the Meeting desk at

(800) 521-4041 Monday through Sunday, 7 a.m. to midnight (EST). United Airlines also offers an additional 5-percent discount on tickets purchased at least 60 days in advance of travel. The Legion discount applies from Aug. 27 to Sept. 12.

CAR RENTALS

Three major car-rental companies — **Hertz**, **Avis** and **National** — are also offering discounts to visiting Legionnaires.

Reservations may be placed with **Hertz** by calling (800) 654-2240 and using Meeting #022M0021. Rates are good from Aug. 27 to Sept. 12. Call anytime between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (EST).

Rent with **Avis** and receive a discount for the 82nd National Convention. Reservations may be placed by calling (800) 331-1600 and using **Avis** Worldwide Discount Number G343699. Rates are available one week before to one week after the meeting.

Another car-rental option is **National Car Rental**, a partner in The American Legion Member Benefit Program. Find out more about National's standard American Legion Member discount by calling 800-CAR-RENT and mentioning the special Legion ID number 5176669.

HOTELS

Hotel availability is broken down by Department:

Best Western Inn Towne Hotel (414) 224-8400 will house the Departments of Alabama and Louisiana.

Four Points Sheraton Hotel (414) 481-8000: California, Indiana, Missouri, North Dakota and Rhode Island.

Holiday Inn Milwaukee-City Centre (414) 273-2950: Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Utah and Vermont.

Hyatt Regency Milwaukee (414) 270-6068: The Auxiliary, 8 et 40 and the Departments of Arizona, Delaware,



Tourists and residents take in Milwaukee's River Walk.

Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Virginia.

Marriott Courtyard (414) 291-4122: Michigan and Montana.

Midway Hotel (414) 769-2100: Wisconsin.

Milwaukee Freeport Inn (414) 764-1500: Maryland.

Milwaukee Hilton (414) 271-7250: Alaska, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, France, Hawaii, Idaho, Mexico, Mississippi, New Mexico, Philippines, Puerto Rico, South Carolina and South Dakota as well as National Headquarters staff.

Radisson Hotel Mayfair (414) 257-3400: Texas.

Ramada Inn Downtown Hotel (414) 272-8410: Iowa, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

Ramada South Airport Hotel (414) 764-5300: Illinois.

Sheraton Hotel Brookfield (414) 786-1100: Massachusetts and New York.

The Astor Hotel (414) 271-4220: West Virginia.

The Clarion Hotel (414) 481-2400: Arkansas, Colorado, Oregon and Washington.

The Park East Hotel (414) 765-1904: Minnesota.

The Pfister Hotel (414) 390-3804: Kansas, Nebraska and New Jersey.

Westwood Hotel & Suites (414) 771-4400: Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

Wyndham Hotel Milwaukee Center (414) 291-4761: Ohio.

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Oratorical winner overcomes personal tragedy

Max Miller overcame opposition and personal adversity to take first place in The American Legion's 63rd National High School Oratorical Contest in Indianapolis April 16.

"I really didn't expect to get here after this week, because my grandmother passed away," Miller said after the awards ceremony. "I didn't get much of a chance to prepare. But I had a feeling that my grandmother was here this weekend and helped me through it."

Joe Caouette, chairman of the National Americanism Commission, said he was impressed with the metaphor Miller used to describe the



National Commander Al Lance presents Max Miller with the first-place plaque following Miller's victory in the 63rd National High School Oratorical Contest.

bond between American citizens and the Constitution. "The principle he used was that the interaction between the Constitution and the American public is a marriage or a kind of a bond. ... I think this won the contest for him," said Caouette.

Along with the first-place plaque, the 18-year-old high-school junior, sponsored by Ankeny, Iowa, Post 42, won an \$18,000 college scholarship. Miller plans to seek a nomination to the U.S. Military Academy.

Matt Moon, 17, of Anchorage, Alaska, took home second place and a \$16,000 scholarship. Sponsored by Post 1, Moon said he would like to put the money to use by majoring in government at Harvard, Yale or Stanford after graduation next year.

The third-place finalist and winner of a \$14,000 scholarship was Mai Anh Huynh, 17, of Evansville, Ind. Huynh was sponsored by Post 365.

Fifty-four contestants from every state, the District of Columbia, France, Mexico and Puerto Rico competed in the National Finals. During the awards ceremony, Caouette told them that they were taking an important message home with them. "Your peers are looking for direction. You must provide that direction," he said.

Children's Home sets example for involvement

National Commander Al Lance is calling on Legion Posts to follow the lead of Oklahoma Legionnaires and play a more active role in the lives of America's young people.

"Let's be honest," Lance said after returning from a visit to Oklahoma, where the Legion actively supports a children's home, "this is a side of The American Legion that America needs to see."

The Ponca City, Okla., Children's Home is sponsored by the Department of Oklahoma and local Posts. There are similar homes in Knightstown, Ind., and Scotland, Pa.

The Oklahoma Legion set aside \$75,000 to build a home for the children of Oklahoma's World War I veterans in 1925. Today, "We're caring for 48 boys and girls," said Lisa McGee, the home's administrative supervisor. The children, ages 10 to 18, are deprived, neglected or abused.

A local Legion Post or individual

member sponsors each child. In addition to covering the costs of a child's room, board and education, "Sponsors donate everything from peanut butter and jelly to clothing," McGee explained. Sponsors also purchase birthday and Christmas gifts for the kids.

"I am not saying every Post or Department should start a home. That would be a Herculean task," Lance conceded. "But I believe our Posts can contribute in some way. Maybe they can start partnerships with existing shelters or homes, sponsor scholarship programs or organize volunteer programs that



Ponca City students play on the grounds of the facility.

connect Legionnaires with the children who need our help," Lance observed. "I know one thing: Legionnaires have the energy, experience, creativity, spirit and resources to help our nation's troubled, neglected or abandoned youth."

Airborne laser turret construction begins

Boeing, TRW, Lockheed Martin and the Air Force announced that fabrication of an airborne laser turret has begun in Sunnyvale, Calif.

The turret will be placed on the nose of a Boeing 747 in 2001. It will be able to detect and destroy theater missiles.

The American Legion has been a long-time supporter of anti-ballistic missile systems like the ABL.



An ABL-equipped 747 fires its weapon in this artist's rendering.

Lance asks Departments for local VA feedback

After numerous discussions with the Legion's Department Service Officers from across the country, National Commander Al Lance is concerned about VA's ability to respond in a timely manner to veterans.

The Legion's VA&R staff works continuously with Department Service Officers and VA to address the problems facing veterans. However, as Lance noted in a memo to Department Adjutants and Service Officers, "there are numerous other issues that sometimes percolate at the local level. Oftentimes, we do not learn of them until they hit the newspapers."

As a result, Lance is asking each Department to keep the VA&R staff informed about problems at the local level of VA. "We will continue to work toward resolving these issues as we continue our efforts to address with Congress and the administration system-wide issues relating to the VA," the memo said.



The USS George Washington, which returned to Vieques in May, prepares to launch an F/A-18 off its flight deck.

Navy returns to Vieques Island

After a year-long hiatus, the U.S. Navy resumed its training operations on the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico in May. Michael Duggan, the Legion's deputy director for National Security and Foreign Affairs, said the Legion supports the Navy's actions.

The Legion had repeatedly called on the Navy to return to Vieques. As National Commander Al Lance stated in April, "The resumption of training on Vieques is non-negotiable. ... Vieques belongs to the taxpayers, and the United States must not beg for permission to use its own military base."

Protests began and naval operations

ended in April 1999 when a bomb went off course and killed a Puerto Rican civilian. U.S. law enforcement officials removed 224 protestors May 4 and 5 of this year. Since then, U.S. Marines have moved in to secure the bombing range's perimeter, and Coast Guard ships have intercepted 56 vessels.

"The Navy has stated unequivocally that there is no other place in the world where it can conduct such large-scale air-land-sea training," Duggan noted. "We need it to maintain readiness, and we're adopting a resolution that articulates our support for the retention of Vieques Island," he added.

N.J. Post 43 supports Unity Tour

Frank Patterson Post 43 in Florham Park, N.J., is the largest single sponsor of the North New Jersey Police Unity Tour. The tour is part of National Police Week, which began May 9 in Washington, D.C.

The event raises money for families of police officers killed in the line of duty. Post 43 raised more than \$9,000 this year.

The Unity Tour comprises a group



Unity Tour bikers pose after completing their 300-mile ride to D.C.

of 80 police bicyclists from 20 different jurisdictions throughout New Jersey. They ride 300 miles from central New Jersey to Washington, D.C.

Korean leaders edge toward face-to-face talks

With the 50th anniversary of the start of the Korean War as a backdrop, preparations for the first-ever summit meeting between leaders of South Korea and North Korea are underway. North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Il and South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung are scheduled to meet face to face this summer.

John Petersen, assistant director for National Security and Foreign Relations at the Legion's Washington offices, said the Legion "supports any serious effort at real peace, but whether this is a seri-

ous effort on the part of the North Koreans or just another ploy to garner aid remains to be seen."

The United States has pressed for bilateral talks at the head-of-state level for

decades. But since the end of the Korean War, North Korean leaders have tried to splinter the U.S.-South Korean alliance by offering to speak only with Washington.



North Korean troops keep watch in Panmunjom, located in the DMZ that separates the two Koreas.

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REUNION INFORMATION

This month we have listed many groups that are planning reunions. Information is provided free to Legion members and other veterans who write VETS and enclose the 5-digit VETS number of each reunion. VETS maintains reunion and contact information for more than 12,000 outfits. Reunion information is also available at no charge on the Internet at www.vets.org. Many libraries and schools will provide Internet access free for veterans with no Internet access or computer skills. We regret that due to call volume we cannot accept phone requests for reunion information. See "How to Use VETS Services" below.

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Coordinators may list reunion information with VETS at no charge. Information may be submitted electronically via the VETS website or on official forms by writing VETS®. Individuals planning new reunions or offering themselves as points of contact for possible new reunions may also register at no charge.

THE NATIONAL VETS® ARCHIVES

The National VETS Archives is a free historical registry for veterans who want to be listed on the VETS roster for each outfit in which they served. Registration is free but to ensure accuracy, must be on official archive forms. Registration may be done electronically at the VETS Internet home page. VETS uses the archives to develop historical rosters and reunion contact information. Deceased veterans may be enrolled posthumously by a family member.

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To promote better accuracy and faster response, and except for reunion information requests, official VETS forms should be used to submit information or request other services. Forms are available free on the VETS website at www.vets.org or they may be obtained by writing VETS at P.O. Box 901, Columbia, MO 65205-0901 and enclosing a self-addressed, stamped #10 (long) reply envelope. VETS normally responds to all written requests the next business day. To keep costs low and still handle thousands of requests each week, VETS does not accept phone calls for reunion information. In an emergency, messages about other services may be left on the VETS voice mail system 24 hours a day at (573) 474-4444. You can also reach VETS via e-mail at admin@vets.org.

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AIR FORCE

303rd ARS #13735, Sept. 12-16; 43rd Bomb Grp., 5th AF #20016, Aug. 28-31; 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing Okinawa/Japan/Korea 1950-56 #15027, Sept. 7-10; Air Rescue Assn. #15115, Sept. 24-29; Berlin Airlift Vets Assn. #15089, Sept. 25-31; Pilot Class 55-V #14005, Sept. 21-25

ARMY

102d Inf. Div. #15811, Aug. 22-29; 103rd Inf. Div. #21864, Sept. 6-11; 103rd Inf. Div., 409th Rgt., Co. D #10269, Sept. 21-25; 148th Ord., 148th MVA Co. WWII #15775, Oct. 4-9; 280th FA Bn. #16212, Sept. 23-30; 300th AFA Bn. (Korea) #15986, Aug. 18-21; 45th Div. MP Co. (Korea) #16003, Oct. 6-9; 45th FA Bn., 8th Inf. Div. #24033, Sept. 7-10; 45th Inf. Div., 279th Rgt. #15902, Oct. 27-30; 55th FA Bn. (WWII) #11024, Sept. 20-22

759th MP Bn. (Berlin Era) #12396, Sept. 26-29; 89th Chem. Mortar Bn. #10691, Sept. 22-26; 97th Inf. Div., 365th FA Bn. #15631, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; ND 164th Anti-Tank & Tank Co. #16134, July 14-17; OCS Class-22 1952 #23607, Oct. 10-14

ARMY AIR CORPS/FORCES

111th Tac. Recon. Sq. (WWII) #16752, Sept. 13-18; 1126th/1399th MP Cos. Avn. (WWII) #16937, Sept. 12-15; 368th Fighter Grp., 9th AF #10799, Oct. 12-16; 3rd Photo Recon. Sq., 20th AF, 311th Recon. Wing #20260, Sept. 9-12; 450th Bomb Grp. (H) #22308, Oct. 11-16

483rd Bomb Grp. (H), 566th Air Engineers (WWII) #16904, Sept. 1-4; 4th Emergency Rescue Sq. #16909, Sept. 20-25; 5th AF, 314th Comp. Wing, HQ & HQ Sq. #16841, Sept. 13-18; 5th AF, 405th Signal Co. (Avn.) #22706, Sept. 13-18; 5th AF, 502nd Tac. Cntrl. Grp. (Korea) #23899, Sept. 13-18; 5th AF, 5th Sta. Hospital (108th Sta. Hosp.) #20038, Sept. 13-18; 5th AF, 80th Serv. Grp. (WWII) #19608, Sept. 13-18; 5th AF, HQ VBC 5th Bomb Cnd. #23213, Sept. 13-18; 81st Fighter Wing Assn. #23450, Oct. 25-30; 9th AF, 323rd Bomb Grp., 455th Bomb Sq. #12464, Sept. 30-Oct. 4

MARINES

1st Airdrome, 15th Defense Bn. (WWII) #10830, Oct. 12-15; 1st Mar, 1st Bn., Co. C (Korea) #13961, Sept. 13-17; 3rd JASCO #17144, Aug. 24-28; Vietnam Helicopter Assn. #13932, Aug. 24-28; Women Marines Assn. #21046, Aug. 31-Sept. 5

MISCELLANEOUS

Korean War Vets of Nebraska #22853, Aug. 25-28

NAVY

35th Seabees #17453, Sept. 21-25; 3rd Seabees #10711, Oct. 11-14; Mail Service Veterans #13960, Sept. 26-Oct. 1; U.S. Navy Armed Guard #17935, Sept. 13-16; USS *Algal* AKA-54 #17809, Sept. 13-17; USS *Badoeng Strait* CVE-116 #18538, Sept. 10-14; USS *Bexar* APA-237 #13417, Sept. 28-Oct. 2; USS *Bristol* County LST-1198 #18738, Oct. 26-30; USS *Bryce Canyon* AD-36 #13757, Sept. 28-Oct. 2

USS *Cebu* ARG-6 #21636, Oct. 18-22; USS *Columbus* CA-74/CG-12/SSN-762 #18362, Oct. 4-9; USS *Constellation* CV/CVA-64 #30064, Oct. 27-31; USS *Courtney* DE-1021 #28384, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; USS *Crawford* DE-1024 #19755, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; USS *Curtiss* AV-4 #17956, Sept. 6-10; USS *Dealey* DE-1006 #40024, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; USS *Eliet* DD-398 #18632, Sept. 20-25; USS *Enterprise* CVAN/CVN-65 #14381, Oct. 4-9

USS *Ernest G. Small* DD/DDR838 #13416, Sept. 14-18; USS *Floyd B. Parks* DD-884 #10572, Sept. 11-18; USS *Gaety* AM-239 #17556, Oct. 6-10; USS *George E. Davis* DE-357 #30106, Oct. 19-24; USS *Gherardi* DD-637/DMS-30 #17431, Sept. 10-16; USS *Hartley* DE-1029 #40023, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; USS *Hornet* CV-8/CVA/CVS-12 #17950, Aug. 23-29; USS *Huntington* CL-107 #13958, Sept. 21-26

USS *John S. McCain* DL-3 #23667, Sept. 1-4; USS *John Willis* DE-1027 #23857, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; USS *Joseph K. Taussig* DE-1030 #18307, Sept. 28-Oct. 1; USS *Joseph Strauss* DDG-16 #23638, Sept. 21-25; USS *Juneau* Assn. #21777, Sept. 13-18; USS *Kadashan Bay* CVE-76/VNC-20 #18035, Sept. 20-24; USS *Kolmer* DD/DER-331/VDE-431 #18033, Oct. 4-8; USS *Leonard Wood* Assn. #17048, Oct. 2-6; USS *Lester* DE-1022 #14389, Sept. 28-Oct. 1

USS *Monssen* DD-798 #17420, Oct. 1; USS *Monterey* CVL-26 #18668, Aug. 30-Sept. 4; USS *Norris* DD/DDE-859 #21313, Oct. 1-4

USS *O'Bannon* DD/DDE-450 Shipmates Assn. #11143, Sept. 1-4; USS *Passumpsic* AO-107 #21962, Oct. 5-8; USS *Pittsburgh* CA-72 #10599, Oct. 4-8; USS *Porter* DD-800/DD-356 #18165, Oct. 24-30; USS *Puget Sound* AD-38 #23920, Sept. 7-11; USS *Quick* DD-490/DMS-32 #14564, Sept. 27-Oct. 3; USS *Ramapo* AO-12 #17682, Sept. 13-17; USS *Richard P. Leary* DD-664 #28287, Oct. 25-30; USS *Rigel* AR-11/AF-58 #18967, Sept. 14-18

USS *Rochester* CA-124 #22741, Oct. 19-23; USS *Rowe* DD-564 #14296, Sept. 7-11; USS *Salem* CA-139 #17373, Oct. 5-9; USS *Tortuga* LSD-26/46 #10436, Sept. 13-18; USS *Thetis Bay* CVE 90/CHVA-1/LPH-1 #17725, Sept. 13-16; USS *Van Vorhis* DE-1028 #40025, Sept. 28-Oct. 2; USS *Vesole* DD/DDR-878 #10041, Sept. 13-18; USS *Virgo* AKA-20/AE-30 #10369, Aug. 30-Sept. 3; USS *Wasmuth* DMS-15 #13602, Sept. 13-17; USS *Watts* DD-567 #19631, Sept. 7-11; USS *Willis* DE-395 #11066, Sept. 21-26

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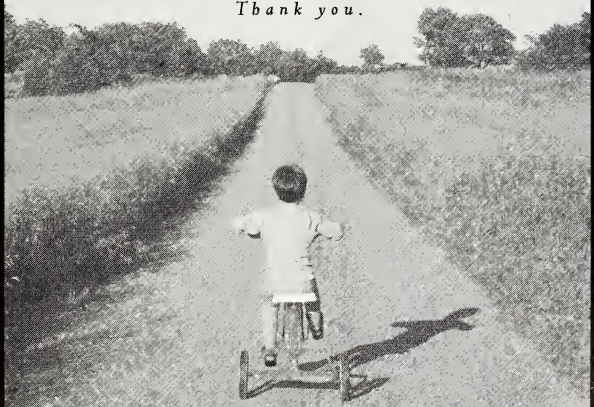
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1985-1986, 1987-1988, Nat'l. Military Affairs Cmte. Memb. 1985-1988, Nat'l. Aerospace Cmte. 1994-1996 and numerous Department positions 1981-1996.

Erle Cocke Jr., Dept. of Georgia. Nat'l. Military Affairs Cmte. Memb. 1945-1946, Nat'l. Military Affairs Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1946-1948, Dept. Cmdr. 1948-1949, Nat'l. Security Cmsn. Chmn. 1948-1950, Nat'l. Cmdr. 1950-1951, Nat'l. Finance Cmsn. Ex-Officio Memb. 1950-1951, Nat'l. Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Chmn. 1950-1951,

Nat'l. Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Vice Chmn. 1951-1952, Nat'l. Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Memb. 1952-1953, Nat'l. Finance Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1953-1958, 1961-1962, Nat'l. Public Relations Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1958-1961 and numerous Department positions 1946-1954.

Jerry A. Kautzer, Dept. of Wisconsin. Dept. Cmdr. 1985-1986, Nat'l. Children & Youth Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1987-1988, Nat'l. Executive Cmte. Memb. 1986-1988, Nat'l.

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Roger A. Munson, Dept. of Ohio. Nat'l. Membership & PA Cmte. Memb. 1962-1963, 1966-1967, Nat'l. Distinguished Guests Cmte. Memb. 1962-1964, Dept. Cmdr. 1968-1969, Nat'l. Merchant Marine Cmte. Memb. 1969-1973, Nat'l. Executive Cmte. Alternate 1970-1972, Nat'l. Executive Cmte. Memb. 1972-1976, Nat'l. Cmsn. on Children & Youth Liaison 1972-1973, Nat'l. Convention Cmsn. Liaison 1973-1976, Nat'l. Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l. Cmdr. 1974-1975, Nat'l. Subcmte. on Cmtes. Nat'l. Cmdr's Rep. 1974-1975, Magazine Cmsn. Memb. 1976-1979, Nat'l. Vice Cmdr. 1977-1978, Nat'l. Security Cncl. Chmn. 1978-1979, Nat'l. Security Cmsn. Chmn. 1982-1993, Nat'l. Policy Coordination & Action Group Memb. 1987-1990, Nat'l. Legislative Cmsn. Consultant 1990-1991, Nat'l. Legislative Cmsn. Rep. 1991-1992, Nat'l. Policy Coordination & Action Grp. Chmn. 1992-1993, Nat'l. Overseas Graves Decoration Chmn. 1992-1993, Nat'l. Veterans Planning & Coordination Chmn. 1992-1993, Nat'l. Cmdr. 1992-1993, Nat'l. Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l. Cmdr. Chmn. 1993-1994, Nat'l. Overseas Grave Decoration Vice Chmn. 1993-1994, Nat'l. Policy Coordination & Action Grp. Vice Chmn. 1994-1995, Nat'l. Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l. Cmdr. Vice Chmn. 1993-1994, Nat'l. Citizens Flag Alliance Vice Chmn. 1994 and numerous Department positions 1966-1982.

Earl B. Wright, Dept. of Maryland. Nat'l. Rehab. Cmsn. Advisory Board Memb. 1970-1971, Nat'l. Veterans Pref. Cmte. Memb. 1971-1973, Nat'l. Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1973-1980, Nat'l. Membership & Post Activity Cmte. Memb. 1979-1980, Nat'l. Americanism Cmsn. Consultant 1980-2000, Nat'l. Legislative Cncl. Memb. (4th Congressional Dist.) 1985-1986 and numerous Department positions 1975-1991.

Raymond H. Steffensmeier, Dept. of Nebraska. Nat'l. Child Welfare Foundation Director 1972-1977, Nat'l. Finance Cmte. Memb. 1968-1977, Nat'l. Finance Cmte. Nat'l. Cmdr's Rep. 1967-1968, Nat'l. Life Insurance & Trust Cmte. Consultant 1977-1982 and numerous Department positions 1964-1969.

Charles J. Brynack Jr., Dept. of Ohio. Nat'l. Membership & Post Activities Cmte. Memb. 1963-1965, Nat'l. Law & Order Cmte. Memb. 1968-1969, 1972-1973, Nat'l. Foreign Relations Cncl. Memb. 1972-1973, Nat'l. Security Cncl. Memb. 1973-1978, Nat'l. Sgt.-At-Arms 1979-1980, Nat'l. Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1980-1988, 1990-1996, 1997-2000 and numerous Department positions 1959-1981.

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